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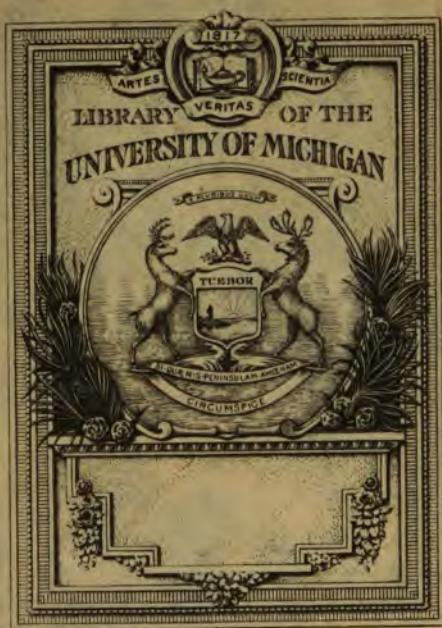
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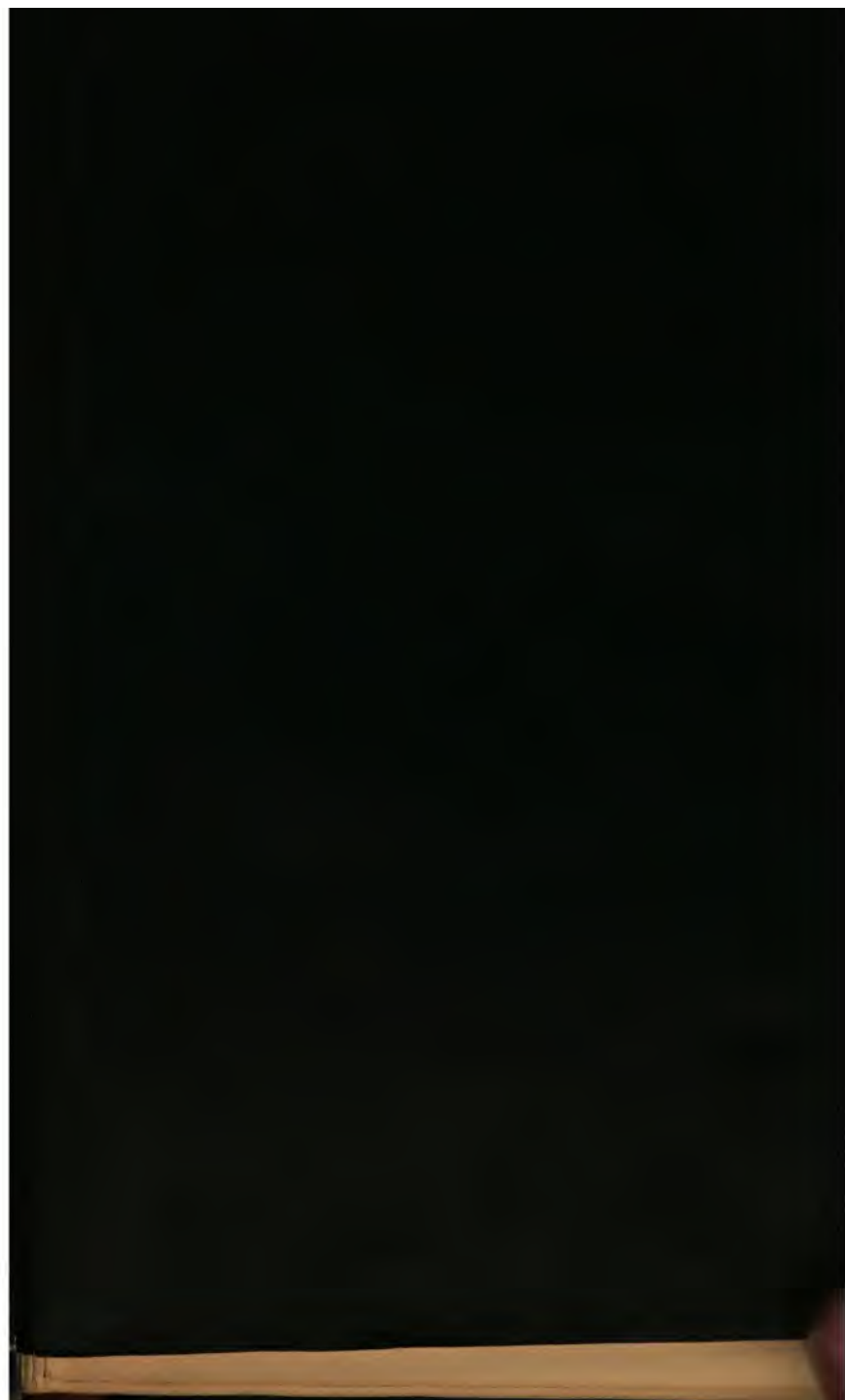
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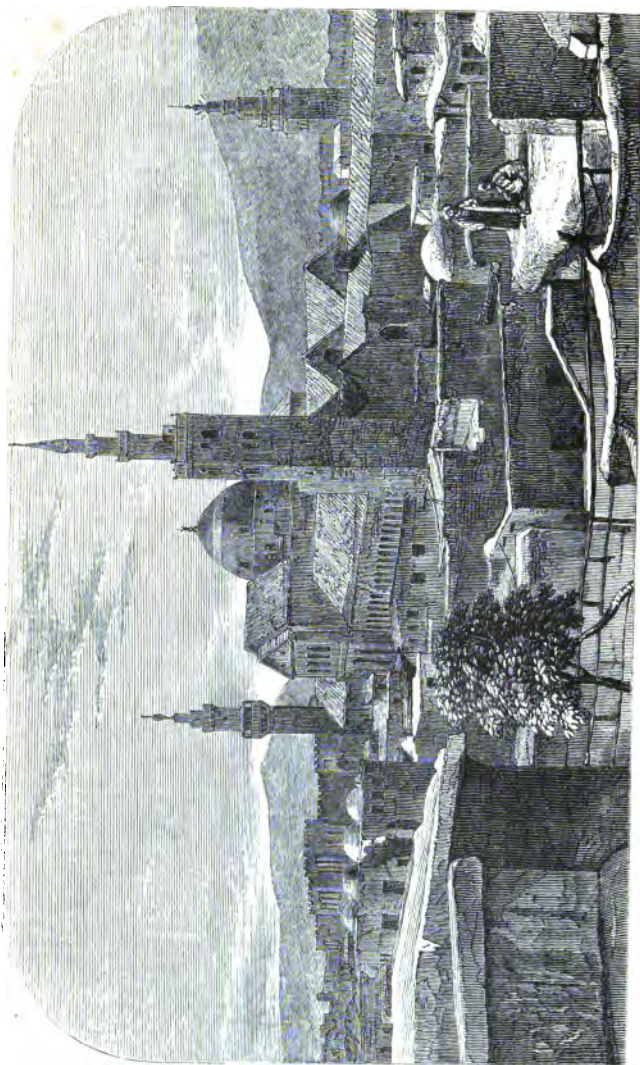


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FRONTISPIECE

GREAT MOSK OF THE OMEIVADES. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

FIVE YEARS IN DAMASCUS;

WITH TRAVELS AND RESEARCHES IN
PALMYRA, LEBANON,
THE GIANT CITIES OF BASHAN,
AND THE HAURÂN.

By ^{James} J. L. PORTER, D.D., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM, ASSEMBLY'S COLLEGE, BELFAST.



SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In preparing a New Edition of this Work I have not thought it necessary to retain minute topographical details. These have already served the purpose for which they were originally written—to rectify the map of that section of Eastern Syria embraced in my travels. I have also omitted the Greek and other inscriptions, as they are of little importance to the general reader, and the scholar may now obtain access to them in the 'Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature,' where they have been published, with a valuable commentary by John Hogg, Esq., F.R.S.

While I have thoroughly revised the whole work, carefully re-examined every point connected with geography and antiquities embraced in it, and considered with respectful attention the critiques with which numerous reviewers and correspondents have favoured me, I have not seen my way to change a single statement, or modify a single opinion. The book remains in substance as it was written fourteen years ago.

That part of the work which treats of the ancient kingdom and cities of Bashan has recently excited more than ordinary attention, and has, apparently for this very reason, called forth, from a certain class of critics, covert insinuations and open charges, which, in my opinion, are both unfounded and unfair. Every author courts criticism. But criticism to be effectual must be honest. When alleged facts are questioned by a critic, the evidence against them ought to be fully stated. When opinions are disputed, the reasons should be clearly assigned. Thoughtful readers will not

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mistake sneering remarks, and cynical allusions, for logical argument.

In travelling through Bashan, I endeavoured to give a faithful, and, as far as space would permit, a full description of the state of the country and character of the buildings, as I saw them. My notes were all written on the spot. Historical details were afterwards added from authentic sources; the prophecies of the Old Testament were quoted as far as they referred to land or cities; and such conclusions were drawn as seemed to me to be warranted by a careful comparison of history and prophecy with the actual state of the country, as it came under my observation. Besides, I was not alone during my tour. Two American friends accompanied me. And since that time Mr. Cyril Graham has traversed the same ground, and penetrated further into the wilds of the Lejah and the plain of Arabia than any of his predecessors. Within the last few months, also, the Rev. Smylie Robson, who probably knows Syria more thoroughly than any living man, visited a part of the Haurân. These gentlemen have all read my book, have testified to the accuracy of its descriptions, and, I believe, agree in the main with my conclusions.

But both my descriptions and conclusions have of late been called in question. A recent writer in the 'Edinburgh Review' says, in a notice of Freshfield's 'Travels in the Caucasus and Bashan':—"Painful as it might be to dispel the illusions raised by his more imaginative predecessors, the conclusion forced upon him and his companions was that the so-called 'Giant Cities' of Bashan, which had excited so much wonder in the minds of Mr. Porter and Mr. Cyril Graham, were in fact no giant cities at all, but mere provincial towns of the time of the Roman Empire."¹ And a reviewer in the London 'Standard' writes still more strongly, as follows:—"Mr. Freshfield's party were able to

¹ No. 266, p. 338.

visit the ruins of Haurân and Lejah, and their examination of these remarkable places was sufficient to upset entirely the conclusion of Mr. Porter, in his 'Giant Cities of Bashan,' and goes very far to disprove the existence of any such giant cities whatever." These writers cannot have read Mr. Freshfield's book or mine through, or, if so, they have read to little purpose; and they manifestly know nothing at all of the subject or the country. They might as well deny the existence of London as the existence of Edrei, and Kenath, and Kerieth, and Salcah, which, the Bible tells us, were cities of Og, the giant king of Bashan, and of the number of those "three-score cities . . . fenced with high walls, gates, and bars," that stood in the province of Argob, and were captured by the Israelites under Moses. I have walked their streets, and entered their houses. The same has been done by Burckhardt, Buckingham, Graham, Wetzstein, and even to some extent by Mr. Freshfield himself.

To deny the existence of these cities, or their origin, as stated in the Bible, is simply absurd. The only point open to discussion is the antiquity of some of their buildings. That they contain many buildings of the Greek and Roman age I admit. That there are some of Saracenic origin I also admit. I have described many of the temples, theatres, churches, and mosques, and have given their dates. But I have stated, and I still maintain, that there are, in addition to these, private houses of a far earlier age; low, massive, and simple in style, with stone roofs and doors. They are sometimes half buried beneath Greek and Roman temples and palaces. Superficial observers may overlook them, and may affirm, as Mr. Freshfield has done, that "it is not of Og, but of the Antonines—not of the Israelitish, but of the Saracenic conquest—that most modern travellers in the Haurân will be reminded;"¹ but those who carefully explore the remains of the larger cities, or visit the smaller ones

¹ Page 59.

which have not been so much altered by Roman and Muslem, will not fail to recognize in them relics of primeval architecture, and of a period when Bashan "was called the land of giants."¹

Mr. Freshfield himself is occasionally forced, though with evident reluctance, to admit the antiquity of some of the houses. In recording his impression of Kerioth, he says: "Among many houses, the comparatively recent date of which is evidenced (?) by fragments of Roman sculpture built up in the interior walls, *a few of earlier times probably exist. These may be of the time of Og or they may not*; there is nothing to show they were built by giants."² Again of Damet-el-Alya (*sic*) he says: "The pelting rain interfered somewhat with our explorations, but I found one interesting old house. The folding-gates of the entrance arch still in their places, led into a courtyard, from which several doors opened into rooms of various sizes. The basement, ground, and first floors were all perfect."³ On the next page he says of Zebireh, in Argob: "We found it entirely deserted. *There were plenty of old stone houses*, and in one was an upstairs room with a fireplace and stone window shutters. The roofs were in some instances supported by quaint pillars, primitively constructed of stones of unequal size, piled, like cheeses, one on another. The manner of building the interior walls in these strange dwellings is very curious. A framework is first constructed of large stones, with square pigeon-holes left between them; these are generally filled up, but sometimes left open, when they look not unlike wine-bins."⁴ Again: "Riding through the town (of Suweideh) we dismounted to visit *the interesting remains of an ancient house; the masonry was extraordinarily massive, like that of a Cyclopean wall.*"⁵ Again: "A further ramble (in Mismiye) was rewarded by several discoveries, the most important being a large house *in the Bashan style of architecture*, but evidently of Roman date. (It would have been

¹ Deut. iii. 3-13. ² Page 39. ³ Page 53. ⁴ Page 54. ⁵ Page 42.

satisfactory had he stated his reasons for this *dictum*). An arched gateway led into a courtyard, from which staircases gave access to the first floor, which contained one noble room, the ceiling decorated with a fine cornice, and supported by an arch eighteen feet in height, from the floor to the keystone. The fact of all the roofs being constructed of stone, renders some such support necessary in every room of too large size to admit of the heavy blocks stretching from wall to wall. . . . We encountered numerous stone doors. We found one pair eight feet high, and saw six *in situ* in one courtyard."¹

Mr. Freshfield saw all this and more, though his tour was confessedly hurried, and his examination superficial; and though he did not visit Edrei, nor Ary, nor Nejrân, nor Salcah, nor Hît, nor Bathanyeh, nor Shuka, nor a tithe of the other cities of Bashan. He tells us he was greatly disappointed. He saw stone gates eight feet high, at least one stone-roofed chamber eighteen feet high, an ancient house, the masonry of which "was extraordinarily massive, like that of a Cyclopean wall," plenty of old deserted stone houses, with rude massive stone doors, window shutters, and rafters; yet he affirms there is nothing in all this to indicate high antiquity: there is nothing to show that the houses were built by giants. I cannot, of course, tell what Mr. Freshfield's ideas of giants may be. They may, for aught I know, be based on the stories of the 'Arabian Nights,' or 'The Legends of Fin M'Coul;' and he may have expected houses as large as the Pyramids. No scholar entertains any such notions. The aborigines of Bashan were doubtless above the ordinary stature of the Hebrews, and hence their name *Rephaim*. A primitive race, as Ewald remarks, possesses gigantic stature more frequently than the more advanced nations. The latter seem to lose in body what they gain in mind. Yet no thoughtful student believes that the Rephaim

¹ Page 57.

were of that enormous size popularly connected with the name "giant." Simplicity, massiveness, and rude strength, would be the natural characteristics of the architecture of such a people ; and these are the characteristics of the old private houses of Bashan. There is nothing like them, so far as I know, in any other country. They are as different as possible in style and workmanship from the Roman temples, Christian churches, and Saracenic mosques which have been built beside them. Many of them have, doubtless, been repaired, and some rebuilt on the old plan, in more recent times ; and this will sufficiently account for the occasional discovery in their walls of a stone with Greek or Roman ornaments. The more fully I investigate this subject, the deeper becomes my conviction that we have in these buildings relics of the primeval Rephaim.

One other point I must notice. On entering Bashan Mr. Freshfield saw a caravan of 400 camels, laden with grain for shipment at Acre, and upon this he remarks : " It struck us as curious that a land described by the latest authority as 'utterly desolate,' should be able not only to feed its inhabitants, but to send away such quantities of grain. What we saw later in the day explained the mystery, and proved *how far preconceived ideas may lead a writer into misrepresentation.*"¹ The misrepresentation is entirely on the side of Mr. Freshfield. I nowhere describe Bashan as "utterly desolate." True, I speak of the utter desolation of the region round Salcah, *which Mr. Freshfield never saw.* I also mention the desolation of some other sections ; but so far from describing the whole country as utterly desolate, in the first edition of this work, published in 1855, I called Bashan "the granary of Damascus ;"² I described the extreme productiveness of the district of Hît ;³ I stated that the wheat of Bathanyeh is celebrated as the finest in Syria ;⁴ I ob-

¹ Page 30.² Vol. ii. p. 2.³ Pages 34, 35, 40.⁴ Page 36.

served that the great plain near Suweideh "still bears crops of grain, whose luxuriance is proverbial."¹ In my little work on the 'Giant Cities,' I wrote substantially to the same effect,² though in a popular sketch, originally intended for the pages of a magazine, I did not think it necessary to give minute details.

Describing his view from the Castle of Bozrah, Mr. Freshfield farther says: "Large flocks were being driven out to pasture; as we watched them, and gazed over the wide expanse of cultivated land we had ridden through from Derat (*sic*), we were naturally led to contrast the facts under our eyes with the desolation described by Mr. Porter, and to indulge in a hope—which even the most ardent enthusiast for the fulfilment of prophecy might share—that better times may be in store for Bashan."³ I visited Bozrah in 1853, and described it as I saw it. Am I to be charged with misrepresentation and exaggeration, because Mr. Freshfield found its state somewhat different in 1868? When I was there there was no Turkish garrison in the castle, there was not a Turkish soldier in all Bashan, the Bedawîn swept the whole plains unchecked. When Mr. Freshfield was there the Turkish standard waved on the battlements, and Turkish troops gave security to the surrounding plain. The results, as stated by Mr. Freshfield, *are just what I predicted*. In 1853 I wrote the following lines in the castle of Bozrah, after describing the desolation I then saw around me: "Formerly a strong force of irregular cavalry was kept here by the Pasha of Damascus, but now there is no garrison, and the rapacious Bedawîn roam freely over the fields of the poor peasants, who have to pay them 'black mail.' Garrisons of a few hundred horse at this place, at Sulkhad, and at Mezarîb, would be sufficient to keep the whole Arab tribes of the desert in check, *and the fertile plain of the Haurân would*

¹ Page 132. ² See pages 31, 33, 36, 45, 60. ³ Page 36.

*then be made to yield one hundredfold its present produce of grain."*¹

I might give other examples of Mr. Freshfield's unjust strictures and unfair insinuations, but I refrain. I have said enough to show my readers either that Mr. Freshfield has not read my descriptions of Bashan at all, or else that he is as careless in the perusal of books as he is in the examination of cities and countries. He is a cynic besides, given to sneer at everything and everybody, not even excepting his travelling companions. Bible prophecies he cannot endure, and he never misses an opportunity of turning to ridicule alleged evidences of their fulfilment. His reviewers have thoughtlessly imitated him, and I now leave both to the judgment of an impartial and enlightened public.

In conclusion I repeat what I have said elsewhere. While wandering through the lands of the Bible, my chief object was to illustrate its truths. The Bible was my constant companion. I read its history on the old stage. I read its prophecies amid the scenes to which they refer. I could not shut my eyes to the graphic details of the Record, nor to the ruins and desolations of the land; and I could not resist the conclusions which a careful comparison forced upon me. The result of extensive travel, and no little research, has been to impress upon my mind the fact that the more we extend our labours in Palestine, whether as antiquaries, geographers, or politicians, the stronger become our convictions of the literal fulfilment of prophecy, and the minute accuracy of God's Holy Word.

COLLEGE PARK, BELFAST.

March, 1870.

¹ Vol. ii. p. i.

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are painted in fresco. The central ornaments and cornices are elaborately carved and gilt, and inlaid with mirrors. The other and principal part of the room is raised about two feet. The walls and ceiling are similar in design to those described, except that the former are in part covered with a wainscoting, carved, gilt, and ornamented with mirrors. Around the three sides run the divans, covered with purple satin, embroidered with gold, and having a deep gold fringe descending to the floor. Though none of the workmanship may bear minute examination, yet all will admit that the general effect is exceedingly striking.

There are many other apartments in the court, less spacious than the *salon*, but no less beautifully finished. The style of decoration in this mansion may be called the modern Damascene, the painting of the walls and ceiling being a recent innovation. In the more ancient houses the ceilings and wainscoted walls are covered with arabesques, encompassing little panels of deep blue and delicate azure, on which are inscribed, in elegantly interlaced Arabic characters, verses and chapters of the Koran.

ANCIENT WALLS OF THE CITY.

I shall now conduct my reader round the city walls. It is worthy of remark that travellers have generally represented Damascus as almost entirely destitute of ancient remains. Of the accuracy of their statements we shall soon be able to form a correct opinion; and it will be seen that there are very few sites in Syria where so many vestiges of ancient splendour exist.

We begin at the *East Gate (Bab Shurky)*. Here are the remains of a Roman portal, consisting of a central and two side arches. The accompanying sketches will convey a better idea of its original form and present state than any detailed description. (See *head of Chapter*.)

Without the gate is a mound of rubbish. Recent excavations have shown that it was the site of furnaces for the manufacture of those finely glazed and coloured tiles and vessels for which Damascus was once celebrated.

I was asleep, when, on the morning of the 12th of December, 1849, our steamer entered the bay of Beyrout. The hoarse sound of the cable, as the anchor was heaved out, roused me. I hastened on deck to gaze on that "goodly mountain;" but the bustling scene in the midst of which I emerged, and the Babel of tongues that fell upon my ear, riveted my attention for the time. Numbers of boats, with fantastically dressed occupants, danced upon the waves round our vessel; scores of porters shouted their deep gutturals in the ears of impatient travellers, as if an excess of sound would render their tongue intelligible. Hotel proprietors and servants, in bad French and worse English, set forth the superiority of their respective establishments. Experience had taught me how to get rid of the annoyance of a multitude. "*Hôtel de Belle Vue*," I cried. No sooner had I pronounced the name than a little man bustled through the crowd, and, taking off his hat, said, with a profound bow, "Your humble servant, sir." It was Antonio Tremetsi, the landlord. We were soon transferred to his boat, and I had time to contemplate at leisure the magnificent scenery.

On the south was the headland of Ras Beyrout, whose gardens and mulberry groves touched the black rocks against which the waves broke. Before us lay the town itself, washed by the waters. The wooded heights behind were studded with villas, beside which, over a mass of underwood, rose here and there a solitary palm or cypress. Farther to the left the bay of St. George swept round in a long graceful curve, until the white sand of its beach met the cliff on the southern bank of the Dog river. Northward ran the shore-line, with its bays and promontories, until lost in the distance. Behind all, from north to south, far as the eye could see, stretched the ridge of Lebanon, its sides furrowed by many a wild ravine, and its summit white with snow. Scores of villages clung to the terraced slopes, or perched on the rugged ridges; while convents crowned every peak and precipice.

We were soon established in *Hôtel de Belle Vue*. The

house was then poor, and badly constructed for a winter residence ; but if an occasional shower found its way through porous walls and leaky roof, or a sudden squall burst open the frail shutters of our unglazed windows, amends were made by the balmy air we breathed and the splendid view we enjoyed during the long hours of sunshine.

The arrival of Dr. Paulding, of the Damascus Mission, made us resolve to accompany him to that city. All arrangements having been completed, we started on Thursday, the 3rd of January, 1850. To us it was a new and interesting sight to observe our caravan winding through the cactus-lined lanes, and emerging into the sandy avenues of the pine-forest. The strange garb of our native attendants, the gay trappings of our baggage animals, adorned with shells and bits of red, white, and green cloth, and the odd-looking tasseled bridles of our own steeds, formed a fantastic picture.

In an hour we reached the foot of the mountains, and commenced the ascent of a bleak and rugged slope. The scenery becomes grander as a higher elevation is gained. The caravan-road, which, however, was then little better than a goat-path, runs along the summit of a ridge, having on the south Wady Shahrûr, terraced, and clothed with mulberry and vine. In an hour and a quarter from the plain we reached a large khan or caravanseraï.

A short distance above the khan the road ascends an almost perpendicular cliff by a zigzag route. On first examination one almost despairs of his horse being able to scale it, or to find footing on the shelving rocks ; but the Syrian horses are accustomed to such paths, so that it seems but play for them to spring up the rugged and irregular stairs. It is somewhat startling to the inexperienced traveller when his steed assumes a vertical attitude, or passes along a precipice brink, where a false step would hurl him hundreds of feet below. But experience teaches one to place confidence in his careful Arab, and to ride, without fear, along paths where an English fox-hunter would deem it madness to risk his neck.

We clambered up a stony ridge to Khan Hussein, and

thence to the brow of a ravine, on the opposite bank of which stood the village of Bhamdûn. Here we had arranged to spend the night in the summer-house of Mr. Smith.¹

January 4th.—We were up before dawn, and I had time to glance at the surrounding country ere the servants were ready for departure. Bhamdûn is situated on the southern brow of a ravine, which runs down south-west about three miles, then sweeps to the southward, increasing in depth and grandeur till it joins Wady el-Kâdy. The view from the village is extensive; but the bare ridges on the west and north cover the noble scenery of the Metn, and render the mountain prospect bleak and uninteresting. Beyrout and its promontory are visible, and beyond lies the vast expanse of the Mediterranean. So clear is the atmosphere and so commanding the position, that I have seen the island of Cyprus with the naked eye, and have distinguished more than once the summit of Olympus.

We mounted at seven o'clock, and in half an hour reached the Damascus road near Khan Ruweisât. The northern part of Wady Hummâna now opened up to our view with its pine forests, olive groves and terraced vineyards. On the east, high above the neighbouring mountains, rises the snow-capped summit of Jebel Kenîseh. The road leads over ground, bare and featureless; and, after passing a rocky ridge, descends to Khan Modeirej. Above the khan it is about the worst in Lebanon. A steep slope is covered with huge fragments of sharp limestone, amid which the poor animals can scarcely find a level spot to plant their feet, and often sink down helpless beneath their burdens. When this is surmounted, a shelving path leads along the side of a precipice to the top of the pass, which has an elevation of 5600 feet. The view towards the west is very grand, the eye following the windings of the glen of Hummâna till it rests on the waters of the Great Sea.

The eastern slopes of Lebanon are altogether different in character and aspect from the western. The descent is

¹ It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader that the Rev. Eli Smith was the associate of Dr. Robinson during his researches in Palestine.

uniform and abrupt from the summit to the plain of Bukâ'a. Few spots are capable of cultivation, and the scenery wants the boldness and grandeur seen amid the ravines on the west. After a rapid descent we reached the village of Kubb Elias, on the border of the plain. Adjoining the village, on the top of a conical hill, stand the ruins of an old castle, said to have been built by one of the Druze princes of Lebanon; and in the side of a cliff, a little to the south, are excavated tombs, showing that this is an ancient site. A fine stream flows through the village, watering gardens and fields below. We stopped for lunch on its green banks, beside a little grove of poplars.

At one o'clock we resumed our journey. The position of Mejdél, where we intended to spend the night, being now seen behind a range of hills on the opposite side of the plain, we resolved, if possible, to take a straight course to it. The caravan-road passes half an hour to the north; should we succeed, therefore, in an attempt to cross the plain direct, our day's march would be considerably shortened. We were soon stopped by canals and marshes; and we had a steeple-chase over drains and ditches ere we regained the road which leads to the foot of the hills near Mejdél. Leaving the caravan in charge of my dragoon, Nikôla, Dr. Paulding and I set off at a gallop to visit a ruin on the summit of the hill above the village. In attempting to scale the steep slope my girths gave way, and it was only by embracing my old charger that I was saved from a fall over his tail. Notwithstanding the accident, we soon reached the summit, and were agreeably surprised to find ourselves beneath the walls of a venerable temple. For chaste simplicity, massive grandeur, and beauty of situation, this ruin is not surpassed in Syria.

The temple, whose ruins cover the summit of the hill and are strewn over the vineyards that clothe its sides, is evidently of an earlier date than those of Bâ'albek and Palmyra, and indeed than most others in this country. The foundations of the cell are composed of huge blocks of limestone; one being 24 feet long and 6 feet high. These

project beyond the face of the walls, and are contracted at the top by a bevelled moulding. The interior is ornamented with fluted Ionic semi-columns, supporting a cornice. Between the columns are niches. A portico of massive columns stood in front, but is now fallen. One portion of a shaft is 24 feet long and 4 feet 6 inches in diameter. The door was lofty and spacious; the jambs were massive monoliths, richly moulded. The view from the ruins is magnificent, embracing the plain of the Bukâ'a with the mountain-chains on each side—northward far as the eye can see, and southward till the hills close and form the sublime gorge of the Litâny. The plain is like a lake, so smooth is its surface; and the artificial mounds which here and there appear might pass for islands.

But how came here this splendid monument of a bygone age? Was it built to stand in solitude, or was it intended to adorn the environs of some city, and to serve as a monument of the wealth and piety of its inhabitants? Neither on the hill itself nor along its base are there any traces of ancient structures; but away on the north-east, where, three miles distant, the fountain of 'Anjar bursts from the foot of the mountain, we observe heaps of stone strewn over the plain. An examination of this place solves the mystery.

On the 19th of May, 1854, I visited the fountain of 'Anjar and the ruins near it. I had previously known that these ruins mark the site of the city of *Chalcis*. The city itself is prostrate; the foundations of the walls alone can be traced, enclosing a rectangular space nearly a mile in circumference. In the interior are a few mounds covered with soil, from which some hewn stones and pieces of broken columns may be seen projecting. These are the only remains of Chalcis. The site was well chosen, and admirably fitted for the capital of a province. In front is a plain of great fertility, while close at hand is an abundant supply of purest water.

Of the origin of the city nothing is known. There are no evidences of very remote antiquity. Ptolemy, the son

of Mennæus, is mentioned by Strabo as ruler of a district of which Chalcis was the capital. It appears to have included Heliopolis and Ituræa, with the mountain region between; but its proper territory was the plain of Marsyas, embracing the southern part of the Bukâ'a, and probably Wady et-Teim and Merj 'Ayûn. After Syria was conquered by the Romans Ptolemy continued to hold his possessions. He was succeeded by his son Lysanias, who transferred the seat of government to Abila, and on his murder by order of Mark Antony, the provinces passed into the hand of Zenodorus the robber. The territory of Chalcis was now separated from the other districts with which it had been united under the sway of Ptolemy, but it does not appear who were its governors between the death of Zenodorus, and the time when it was given by the Emperor Claudius to Herod, son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great. It may probably have formed part of the tetrarchy of Lysanias, who is mentioned in Luke iii. 1.

The temple doubtless owes its origin to some of the princes of Chalcis. It was a common practice with the members of the Herodian family to erect temples or found cities in honour of those emperors who conferred important favours upon them. Perhaps Herod Agrippa II., whose taste for architecture is well known, constructed this building as a monument of his gratitude to Claudius for bestowing on him the principality in which it was situated.

January 5th.—To get up this morning did not require any great effort. We were glad when the first dawn appeared, for it was the signal for departure; and we rode off amid the howling of a multitude of savage dogs. We joined the caravan road at the entrance of Wady Harîr. Dark clouds now covered the mountain-tops, and thunder rolled ominously in the distance, so that we had gloomy forebodings about the weather. The dread of rain, for which we were badly prepared, made us urge on our horses, and the muleteers were soon left behind. The valley we entered winds between lofty hills. The scenery is picturesque: the sides, rising with a uniform slope, are clothed

it with his toe ! Others are carving pieces of wood, or inlaying them with silver and mother-of-pearl ; and while the hands ply mallet and chisel, the toes do duty as a vice !

Returning to the Roman arch in the *Sultāny*, we continue our walk. Following the street through files of tinsmiths and fruit-box manufacturers, we turn to the right and enter the Seed-market. Spices, preserved fruits, and confections are arranged in the open stalls on each side, reminding one that the glowing descriptions in the 'Arabian Nights' are not all imaginary. On reaching the middle of the bazaar we see a noble gateway, which, as a specimen of Moorish architecture, is scarcely surpassed. It is the entrance to the great khan *Assad Pasha*. The interior, though spacious, falls far short of the expectations excited by the glowing description of Lamartine. The splendid dome, which recalled to the poet's mind that of St. Peter, resolves itself into nine diminutive cupolas ; and the granite columns which his fancy pictured are square blocks of masonry. Five minutes' walk through crowded bazaars now brings us to one of the most interesting remains of antiquity in the city, and one of the finest buildings in Syria—

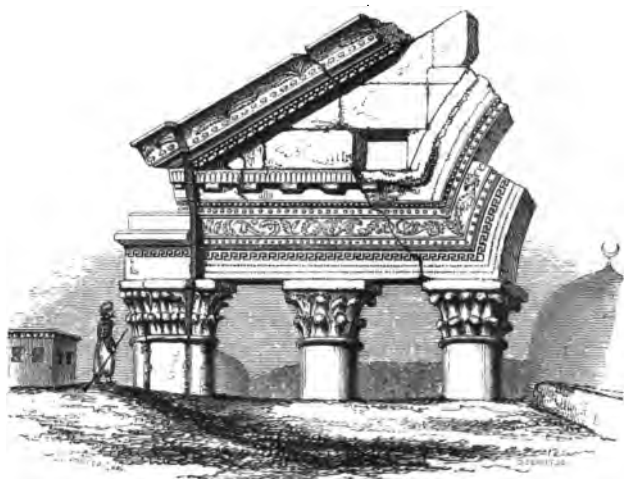
THE GREAT MOSQUE.

A glance at the accompanying plan¹ will enable the reader to perceive the point to which I have conducted him ; and by consulting it he will be able to follow me while I describe this splendid edifice.

At the top of the steps which lead down to the book bazaar are four massive columns, at each end of which is a square pier of masonry with a semi-column on the inner side. The shafts alone are visible from the street, as the

¹ For the greater part of the measurements from which this plan has been constructed I am indebted to M. Antōn Bulād. He obtained them from a Christian who was employed by the authorities a few years ago to repair the interior of the mosque. This man was not satisfied with the general dimensions ; he measured every pillar and every chamber in the whole fabric. Any one may see at a glance that it does not differ materially from that recently published by Capt. Wilson.

capitals rise above the roof ; but on ascending to the top of a neighbouring house, the capitals and superstructure can be examined. These columns supported a triumphal arch, a portion of which, with the frieze and cornice, still remains. The accompanying sketch will convey some idea of its present state and former grandeur. The length is over 80 feet, and the height could not have been less than 70 feet. From this arch a double colonnade leads to the western gate of the mosque.



Remains of Triumphal Arch.

The mosque is a quadrangle 163 yards long by 108 wide, surrounded by a lofty wall. On the northern side of the quadrangle is an open court, with cloisters round three sides. Many of the columns have, within the past century, been enclosed in piers of masonry. On the south side of the court is the mosque or *hârem*, whose interior dimensions are 431 feet by 125. Its side-wall toward the court is supported on columns, most of them enclosed in piers. Two rows of columns, 22 feet high, extend the whole

length of the building, support the triple roof, and divide the interior into nave and aisles of equal dimensions. Across the middle is a transept supported on eight massive piers; and a dome, nearly 50 feet in diameter and above 120 in height, stands in the centre. The interior of the mosque has a tessellated pavement of marble. The wall of the transept, and the piers that support it, are coated with marble in beautiful patterns; while on portions of the wall above, and on the interior of the dome, may be seen fragments of mosaic. The *Minbar* or "pulpit" stands between the two southern piers that support the dome, and is covered with a canopy of green velvet richly embroidered. Between the third and fourth columns to the east of the piers is a structure of great beauty. Its walls are of wood, carved, inlaid, and gilt; on the top is a cupola, covered with a substance resembling tin-foil of a delicate green colour, and surmounted by a golden crescent. Underneath it is a cave in which is said to be placed the *head of John the Baptist*!

Leaving the mosque by the southern door, we observe two colonnades running southward. Following the line of these through the silk-thread bazaar, we enter the silversmiths' bazaar, to the roof of which we ascend, and obtain one of the best views of the southern side of the mosque. Here we see a long range of *round-arched* windows, which, with the character of the masonry, indicate that the wall was erected before the Mohammedan era. At the southwestern angle is a section of masonry with pilasters, of a still earlier date; and on the great windows in the end of the transept we can trace another ancient fragment. This latter is of high antiquity, and formed part of a once splendid edifice. It was left in its present position in order to preserve a doorway whose sides and top are ornamented with scroll-work and leaves, somewhat similar in design and execution to those of the temple at Bâ'albek. On each side of this door is a smaller one of similar workmanship. The circular top of that on the east can be seen above the roof of the bazaar; but by looking down a little opening on the west, its fellow may be perceived entire. This

magnificent portal is not in the centre of the building, and could not have been intended for a structure similar in design or extent with that now existing. Over the door is a cross, and a Greek inscription to the following effect :—
“Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.” It is the Septuagint rendering of Psalm cxlv. 13.

Before the eastern gate is a portico shut in by a solid wall at the sides and angles ; but having in front six columns supporting semicircular arches. The columns, like those of the interior, are Corinthian. The mosque has three minarets. The Minaret of the Bride, which stands near the centre of the northern side of the court, and is the most ancient, having been erected by the Khâlif Walîd. The Minaret of Jesus stands at the south-eastern angle, and is nearly 250 feet high. There is a tradition that Christ, when He comes to judge the world, will first descend on this minaret ; and then, entering the mosque, will gather before him Muslems, Christians, and Jews. All being assembled, the names of believers will be read, and Christians and Jews will learn to their dismay that Muslems alone have their names inscribed in the “Book of Life.” The Western minaret is in the Saracenic style, and is of exquisite beauty. (See *Frontispiece*.)

The style and workmanship of three distinct eras are distinguishable in this mosque and the adjoining ruins. We have the massive columns and superstructure of the triumphal arch, the portion of the wall at the south-western angle, and the splendid doorway on the southern side, as types of Grecian or Roman architecture. We have the exterior walls with their semicircular-arched windows, and the Greek inscription, remnants of the Christian age. And we have the dome, the minarets, the tessellated pavement and marble fountains as emblems of Muslem rule. History and tradition concur in their testimony to the correctness of this conclusion. Christian and Mohammedan inhabitants alike believe that this structure was once a heathen temple, that it became a Christian church, and then a mosque.

The only other buildings deserving particular notice are the following:—The tomb of Saladin, whose body was first buried within the castle, but afterwards removed to the place, near the great mosque, which it now occupies. A mausoleum has been erected over his grave. A short distance from it, on opposite sides of the street, are the mausoleums of Melek ed-Dhâher Bibars and his son—fine specimens of Saracenic architecture. The interior of the former may generally be seen through the windows. The floor is of marble, the walls are covered with mosaic, and the ceiling adorned with arabesques. The mosque and hospital of Sultan Selîm is a splendid structure, beautifully situated on the banks of the river west of the city. In the interior are some columns of red and grey granite, and one or two of porphyry. From the rising ground beside this mosque may be obtained one of the most enchanting views around Damascus. In front is a little vale covered with verdure, through which the Abana meanders on its way to the city. The graceful slopes on each side are covered with foliage. In the background rise the mountains, naked, white, and rugged, while in the centre of the range yawns the gorge through which the Abana enters the plain.

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY OF DAMASCUS.

1st Period : *First notice in Bible — When founded, and by whom — Tradition of Abraham — David takes city — Ben-Hadad and his royal line — Reson — Kingdom of Damascus — Elijah — Naaman — Elisha — Hasael — City taken by Jeroboam — By Tiglath-Pileser — Fulfilment of prophecy — Fall of Assyrian empire — The city captured by Pharaoh-Necho, and by Nebuchadnezzar — Alexander the Great — Damascus under the Ptolemies — Growing influence of Rome — Fall of Egyptian rule in Syria — Division of empire of the Seleucidæ — Damascus again a royal city — Aretas — Fall of the Seleucidæ — The city taken by the Romans — Pompey — Damascus under the Romans — Aretas and Herod — Spread of Christianity — Paul's conversion — Damascus a metropolitan city — Besieged and taken by Mohammedans — Under the Arabs — Muslem dynasties — The Crusaders — Saladin — Timûr — Statistics.*

THE history of Damascus, if written with that fulness which its importance demands, would fill a volume. This is a task I do not attempt. A brief sketch of the leading events is all I aim at. Such as have wandered with me among its remains of former grandeur may wish to know something of the men who erected them. To these I dedicate the following pages.

The first notice of the city in the Bible is in Genesis, where we read that Abraham, having overcome the kings who had pillaged Sodom, "pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus."

The countries peopled by the descendants of Shem are not so clearly defined as those possessed by their brethren. We read, however, that *Aram* was a son of Shem ; and it

is well known that the name of the kingdom of which Damascus was the capital was *Aram*. The region called by this name was of great extent ; but the several sections of it had distinguishing appellations, as *Aram Damesk*, *Aram Naharayim*, *Padan Aram*, and many others.

We have no reason to question the statement of Josephus, that Aram the son of Shem was progenitor of the Aramites, whom the Greeks call Syrians ; and that Uz, the son of Aram, was the founder of Damascus.

When Aram and his descendants took possession of north-eastern Syria, Damascus would be one of the first sites chosen for permanent habitation. The wide-spreading plain, luxuriant vegetation, and abundant waters, could not fail to attract attention. Wandering tribes in search of a home were drawn together by the richness of the spot, and in those early days founded a city which has survived the lapse of 4000 years, and even yet retains the freshness and vigour of youth.

Josephus says, quoting Nicolaus of Damascus :—" Abram reigned at Damascus, being a foreigner, who came with an army out of the land above Babylon. But after a long time he got up and removed from that country also with his people, and went into the land of Canaan. Now the name of Abraham is even still famous in the country of Damascus ; *and there is shown a village named from him ' THE HABITATION OF ABRAHAM.'*" It is remarkable that in the village of Burzeh, an hour north of the city, there is a *wely* called after the patriarch, and held in high veneration by Muslims. Pilgrimages are made to it every year, and miracles are said to be performed by derwishes and sheikhs.

The territory of Damascus was not included in the land divided by lot among the tribes of Israel. The province of Naphtali bordered upon it, and so also did that of the half tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan. Even the country promised by God to the Israelites in the Book of Numbers does not embrace Damascus.

The next mention of Damascus is in the history of David. It must at that period have been a powerful monarchy, or

its king would not have ventured to make war on the victorious King of Israel.

The kingdom of Damascus was of considerable extent. Besides its own proper territory, which embraced the eastern slopes of Antilebanon, it included the greater part of Bashan and Gilead, with the valley of Cœlesyria. In addition to these, it appears that the Aramean kings of Maachah and Mesopotamia were tributaries.

One of the most interesting episodes in the history of Damascus is the story of Naaman the leper. During some predatory incursion his soldiers captured a little Jewish maid, who became attendant or slave to Naaman's wife. Seeing her master's sufferings, she told him of the great Jewish prophet, and the result is well known.

A few years after this event Damascus was honoured by a visit from Elisha. Benhadad was sick, and his sufferings not only made him overlook his old enmity to the prophet, but induced him to consult him as to his prospects of recovery. The man who was despatched on this errand was that Hazael whom God had commanded Elijah to anoint king over Damascus. He was recognised, and his guilty designs detected. The prophet foresaw and related to him the fearful acts of cruelty he would perpetrate on the people of Israel, and the desolations he would occasion in their land. The reply of Hazael was characteristic of his deep cunning—"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Hazael returned to Damascus, and that very night murdered his master. Thus terminated the dynasty of Hadad, after a rule of more than 160 years.

About this period the rulers of Assyria began to encroach upon Western Asia. Pul plundered a portion of Northern Palestine; and Tiglath-Pileser carried many of the people away captive. The King of Judah in his difficulties sought aid from the latter monarch, who was not slow to give it. He marched across the plains of Eastern Syria, laid waste the country, and captured Damascus. Its monarch fell by the sword of the conqueror; and its people were led captive to the banks of the Kir,

This was the first great revolution in the affairs of Damascus, and the termination of the first epoch of its history. The high position it had held as a capital city, during a period of more than 300 years, was now lost. The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled:—"Damascus is taken away from being a city."

Down to the time of Alexander the Great, Damascus was the most important city of Syria; and it alone, by singular good fortune, almost escaped the ravages of war. The new and final partition of the empire of Alexander changed the face of Western Asia. Syria was divided between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, and the territory of Damascus with Palestine became border land. Seleucus, desirous of exercising his influence both in the East and West, resolved to establish the seat of his government in northern Syria, and for this purpose founded *Antioch*. The splendour and wealth of this city speedily eclipsed Damascus, and it was 1000 years ere the latter regained its ancient position.

Lucullus, the patron of the last of the Seleucidæ, having been recalled to Rome, and Pompey appointed in his place, he despatched two of his lieutenants to take possession of Syria. Syria was now constituted a Roman province and placed under the command of Scaurus, and Damascus became the seat of government. This is the termination of the third great epoch in the history of Damascus. The supremacy of the Greeks was now at an end, having existed for 268 years (B.C. 333 to B.C. 65), and the Romans assumed the sway. Fortune still favoured this ancient city, and the change of dynasty did not check its prosperity.

While Judæa was the theatre of almost incessant wars, Damascus, under the immediate government of Rome, enjoyed comparative tranquillity. On the death of the tetrarch Philip his territory was annexed to the Roman province, which bordered on the dominions of Herod east of the Jordan, and on the kingdom of Aretas toward the Arabian desert. Herod was Aretas' son-in-law, but through his guilty passion for his brother Philip's wife he had, in the

days of John the Baptist, divorced the daughter of Aretas. This act was the occasion of a war in which Herod was worsted by the Arabian king. Tiberius the emperor, hearing of the defeat of his friend, sent orders to Vitellius, then governor of Syria, to march against Aretas. The Roman prefect made preparations to obey, but, when about to set out, news reached him of the emperor's death. Aretas was prepared to defend his kingdom and his life, and, finding that the Roman general had suddenly left the southern part of his province with a portion of his troops, he became himself the aggressor. From Herod he had little to fear; and marching across the plain of Gaulanitis and Ituræa, he captured Damascus. Tiberius died in the spring of A.D. 37, and soon after his death the hitherto unfortunate Agrippa was released from prison and presented by the new emperor Caligula with the provinces formerly held by Philip, with the addition of Abila of Lysanias. It was two years subsequent to this, however, before he proceeded to take charge of his kingdom; and in the mean time Aretas remained in possession of Damascus.

It was during the reign of Aretas the Christian religion began to be proclaimed in the city and province of Damascus. The above sketch of the political history will illustrate the statements made in the New Testament in reference to the conversion of the apostle Paul and the events that followed it. Paul, after the recovery of his sight, commenced to preach the gospel in the Jewish synagogues. But he soon left the city and went into Arabia, that he might enter at once on his great work of *converting the heathen*. After a considerable stay in Arabia he returned to Damascus. The city was now held by Aretas, and consequently as soon as the apostle began openly to preach there the governor under Aretas attempted to apprehend him. The great anxiety thus manifested by the Arabian governor for Paul's capture cannot, I think, be sufficiently accounted for by the hostility of the Jews. They may have supplied information and stimulated to greater vigilance, but I cannot believe that the friendship

existing between the Arabian monarch and the Jewish people was either so cordial or so intimate as to cause the former to set watches on the city gate to apprehend a so-called apostate from the Jewish faith. May not the apostle's zeal in preaching the gospel in Arabia and in exposing the immoralities and superstitions of its inhabitants have drawn attention to him as a man of dangerous character?

When Constantine ascended the throne of the Cæsars two great changes were effected in the empire. The seat of government was removed to Constantinople, and Christianity was made the established religion. The numbers of the Christian communities in the provinces of the empire were before this time very great, and Damascus contained a large church. When the first General Council assembled at Nice, A.D. 325, Magnus, the Metropolitan of Damascus, was present with seven of his suffragans. In a later age there were fifteen dioceses reckoned under Damascus. The extent, wealth, and influence of the Christian Church in this city may be estimated by the splendour of the cathedral, which, as we have seen, was dedicated in the fourth century.

The armies of Islam appeared before the walls of Damascus only thirteen years after Mohammed's flight. In this short period the Prophet had promulgated a new faith, established a powerful sect, and infused into them a fiery zeal without parallel in the annals of the world. During this period the prowess of his arms was acknowledged by the wild hordes of the desert, and by the inhabitants of bordering cities: Busrah, the key to the rich province of Haurân, fell, and Palmyra was captured and plundered. The luxurious inhabitants of Damascus offered but a feeble resistance, and most of them were, after a short time, eager to surrender. Never was this ancient city in greater danger of being utterly destroyed. Khâled, the fierce chief of the Muslims, stung by the loss of some of his dearest companions, swore that he would put every inhabitant to the sword and raze the city to the ground. A traitor

priest came to him while meditating revenge, and basely offered to betray the city. The offer was eagerly embraced, and a band of Arabs was led by a private way within the walls. All seemed lost ! But the good fortune of Damascus did not desert it. At the moment when Khâled was listening to the words of a traitor, the more gentle Abu Obeidah was arranging a treaty of surrender with a deputation of the principal citizens. As Khâled entered the East Gate, the West was thrown open to Abu Obeidah. The two parties met near the centre of the city, opposite the church of St. Mary. After a stormy scene, Khâled yielded, and Damascus was saved.

Twenty-seven years after the capture of the city by the Saracens, Moâwyah, the first khâlif of the dynasty of the Omeiyades, made it the seat of his government, and capital of the Mohammedan empire. Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia were subject to the sway of the successor of the "Apostle of God;" and his dominions were soon extended far beyond those countries. The armies of the khâlifs spread along the northern shores of Africa to the Atlantic. The continent of Europe now lay before them. Their soldiers had been driven back from the walls of Constantinople, and forced to recross the Bosphorus ; but they were admitted into Spain by the base act of one of her own sons (A.H. 93). That kingdom was soon conquered, and even the Pyrenees presented no barrier sufficient to check the swift and desolating progress of the Arabs. They scaled the snow-clad mountains, and saw at their feet the rich plains of Languedoc. But there they were destined to receive a blow that for ever stopped their progress northward. In the East their conquests were no less brilliant : their armies crossed the Indus and entered Hindustan ; and they also swept over the mountains and through the vales of Bokhara. Thus did our ancient city become the capital of an empire reaching from the shores of the Atlantic on the west, to the Himalayas and steppes of Tartary on the east. It ruled over some of the fairest and most fertile regions of the old world. Europe trembled

at its power, and the effeminate descendants of the old Romans felt that the throne of the Cæsars was tottering to its fall.

The Omeiyades adorned Damascus with palaces and mosques of great extent and magnificence. Unfortunately, while the khâlifs reared up their own structures and decorated their palaces and temples, they took their materials from buildings of a purer taste. Roman colonnades and porticoes were thus destroyed, and a few fragments only left to mark the spot where they stood.

In the year A.D. 750, Damascus was abandoned by royalty, and Baghdad became the seat of the khâlifs. Our city, however, did not lose much of its importance. The richness of the province of which it was capital, and its sacredness as the starting-place of the holiest pilgrim caravan, made it not only one of the wealthiest but one of the most venerated cities in the Muslem empire.

About the middle of the twelfth century Nûr ed-Dîn captured the city, and proved one of its greatest benefactors. He repaired the walls, and partly rebuilt the citadel; and he established a court of justice, which was celebrated throughout the Mohammedan empire for integrity. The valour and prowess of this prince soon extended his influence beyond the bounds of Syria, and the Fatimite khâlif of Egypt requested his aid against the Crusaders who were invading that land. He was not slow to afford relief, and sent a general with some choice troops. This general soon became one of the most celebrated characters of the age; and there is no Eastern monarch whose name is so familiar in our day as that of Saladin. He was by birth a Kurd, but, prompted by poverty and ambition, he left his native mountains and entered the service of the ruler of Damascus. On being sent to Egypt he soon relieved the khâlif of all anxiety in regard to the Crusaders; but he himself became a far more formidable object of solicitude. He eventually dethroned the last of the Fatimite dynasty, and proclaimed in his stead the reigning monarch of the Abassides; but he remained the virtual ruler of Egypt.

On the death of Nûr ed-Dîn, Saladin assumed the reins of government, and became King of Syria. Damascus was again made the capital of a large and powerful monarchy ; and its ruler proved the most formidable enemy ever encountered by the Crusaders. In A.D. 1187 Saladin fought a pitched battle with the Franks near Tiberias, and gained a signal victory, taking prisoner the King of Jerusalem, with some of the noblest of his followers and allies. This victory was almost fatal to the power of the Crusaders in Syria : Acre, Sidon, Beyrout, and Jerusalem, soon yielded to the arms of the conqueror ; and it was only when Richard Cœur-de-Lion arrived in Palestine that Saladin was checked in his career of victory.

Saladin died in Damascus in A.D. 1193. He was first buried in the castle, but some years afterwards his body was removed to the tomb it now occupies near the north-western angle of the court of the Great Mosque. The tidings of his death were received with unaffected sorrow throughout his dominions. In Damascus, where his subjects had the best opportunities of witnessing his justice and clemency, the people mourned as for a father and benefactor ; and to this day his name is venerated by every Muslem.

Damascus was captured and burned by Timur in the end of the fourteenth century. Early in the sixteenth it was taken by the Turks, and has since remained, at least nominally, under the sceptre of the Sultan.

The most remarkable fact connected with the history of this city is, that it has not only existed but flourished under every change of dynasty and under every form of government : it may be called the *perennial city*. Its station among the capitals of the world has been wonderfully uniform. The presence of royalty does not appear to have greatly advanced its internal welfare, nor does their removal seem to have induced decay or even decline. It has never rivalled, in the vastness of its extent nor in the gorgeousness of its structures, a Nineveh, a Babylon, or a Rome ; but neither has it resembled them in the greatness of its fall nor in the desolation of its ruins. It has existed and prospered

alike under Persian despotism, Grecian anarchy, and Roman patronage ; and it exists and prospers still, despite Turkish oppression and misrule. It is like an oasis amid the desolation of ancient Syria ; it has survived generations of cities which have in succession risen around it ; and while they lie in ruins, it possesses the freshness and vigour of youth.

STATISTICS OF DAMASCUS.

The population of Damascus it is impossible to determine with accuracy. The Government takes a census, it is true, but the carelessness of the officers employed, together with the inviolability of the harâm and the privacy of Eastern life, render it far from exact or full. The following summary has been drawn up from the last Government census. I consider, however, that it is about fifty per cent. too low. The population of Damascus is over 150,000.

POPULATION OF DAMASCUS.

SECTS.	NUMBERS.	
Muslems .. .. .	.. ..	74,464
Druzes .. .. .	.. ..	500
Christians of Greek Church	5,995	14,025
„ Greek Catholic	6,195	
„ Syrian	260	
„ Syrian Catholic	350	
„ Maronite	405	
„ Armenian and Chaldean	405	
„ Armenian Catholic	235	
„ Latin	110	15,000
„ Protestant	70	
Strangers, soldiers, slaves, and protégés ..	.. ..	15,000
Jews .. .. .	.. ..	4,630
Total .. .. .	.. ..	108,619

The massacre of 1860, and the emigration which followed it, greatly reduced the Christian population.

The MUSLEMS of Damascus may be described as feeble, licentious, and fanatical. The religion they profess places

no restraint upon their passions ; and experience proves, at least so far as regards this city, that polygamy has not the effect of restraining from worse conduct.

Muslems spend their time between indolence and indulgence, wandering with solemn step from the harim to the bath, and from the bath to the mosque. They are a praying people, and so are they a washing people ; and there is just as much religion in their ablutions as in their devotions. Prayer with them is a simple *performance*. They pray as they eat, or as they sleep, or as they make their toilet. These are all parts of the daily routine, performed with the same care and with the same solemnity. The Muslem merchant will lie and cheat, and swear and pray, and lie and cheat and swear again ; and these are like different scenes in the same drama, each in its place. His feelings are not shocked by thus mixing up things sacred and profane ; and the reason is, there is no sacredness in his prayers. A Muslem emir or pasha will issue orders for oppression, cruelty, and even murder ; and when the Muezzin call is heard, will spread his carpet, stroke his beard, and engage in prayer with a serenity, and we may add a solemnity, of countenance that is altogether wonderful.

THE CHRISTIANS of Damascus are enterprising and industrious, and a considerable proportion of the trade of the city is in their hands. They are rapidly increasing in number, wealth, and influence, and have almost entirely thrown aside that cringing demeanour which was the result of ages of oppression. They now feel secure both in amassing and displaying their wealth ; but the protection they enjoy and the security they feel are solely owing to the presence and influence of European consuls. The English consul, Mr. Wood, has contributed more than all others to release both Christians and Jews from the indignities to which in former times they were subjected by their Muslem lords ; and when, in consequence of the aggressions of Russia, the old fanatical spirit was lately roused, and Christians were met in every part of the city with curses

and abuse, it was mainly through Mr. Wood's energetic remonstrances and bold measures that the Muslims were forced to suppress their fiery hatred and bigotry.¹

The Jews of Damascus are not numerous, but they are influential on account of the wealth of some of the families, who were for many years the bankers of the pashas and great merchants. Until the interference of European powers in the internal affairs of Syria, the changes of fortune through which some of the leading Jews passed were wonderful, and had more of the character of an Eastern romance than of stern and fearful reality. A Jew would at one time be the virtual ruler of Syria, and then in a few weeks he would be stripped of fortune, and perhaps cruelly mutilated, or even murdered. Circumstances are now changed. Safe under the protection of European consuls, the Jew can buy and sell and get gain.

Damascus is a mercantile city, carrying on an extensive trade with the Bedawîn, who pasture their flocks on the plains of Arabia. It is an entrepôt for the wares of Persia and India, which are imported by caravans from Baghdad. The annual Hâj pilgrimage is also a source of profit. The caravan reaches the city about the middle of the month Ramadân; and from that time till its departure, on the 15th of the following month, the streets and bazaars are crowded by thousands, eager alike to buy and sell. Every pilgrim endeavours to make his journey profitable by traffic, and this is not thought in any way to interfere with the sanctity of his character or the fervour of his worship. It is a peculiar feature of Islam that traffic and religion, cheating and praying, lying and devotion, can be blended without the least discord. The Persian hajy brings carpets, embroidery, shawls, inlaid caskets, and precious stones, to barter for Damascus silks and cotton fabrics, which he takes back to his own land.

¹ The above words were written in 1854. The massacre of 1860 entirely changed the position of the Christians.

CHAPTER IV.

JOURNEY TO PALMYRA.

Bedawy Sheikh — Dromedaries and their saddles — Kuteifeh — Evening entertainment — Frank sorcery — Early rising — Jerūd — Sheikh Fâres and Arab cavaliers — The desert — The Bedawy in the desert — Encampment of Bedawîn — Patriarchal customs — A feast — Evening party in a tent — Night adventure — Excitement of desert travel — A chase — Bedawy Harîms — Enemies — Preparations for battle — Singular mountain — Encounter with robbers — Arab hospitality — Cold march — Robbers — The spoils of a caravan — Illustrations of Scripture — Bedawy women — Apprehended dangers — First view of Tadmor — A "charge" — Attack and capture of our party — Our prison — Alarming conversation — A comic scene — Ride to Palmyra — Description of the ruins — Historical sketch — Return — Kuryetein identified with Hazar-enan.

HAVING effected an arrangement with a sheikh of the 'Anezy, we were prepared to start for Palmyra on the morning of the 31st of March, 1851. As there are no hotels on this route, and as the tents of the Arabs are wide apart, and not always to be found when the hungry traveller might want them, we deemed it necessary to lay in a stock of provisions. Knowing, too, by experience, that we should probably be exposed to sudden changes of temperature, we piled up a goodly heap of coats, cloaks, and coverlets for service by night or day. A leathern water-bottle lay beside our stores, and several other articles were grouped around, the use of which a stranger might have had difficulty in discovering. Hour after hour passed as we wandered up and down the court, or sat upon the fountain's brink; but the sheikh did not appear. Our patience was exhausted, and, casting aside our travelling costume, we threw ourselves on a divan, despairing of starting till another day. The voice of the

Muezzin from the minaret of the Great Mosque announced the hour of noon ; and soon after Sheikh 'Amer entered. He was a man of middle stature and middle age. His frame was spare but wiry. There was no evidence of strength, but there was evidence of capability to endure fatigue. His eye was quick, with more of shrewdness than fierceness in its glance. The expression of his countenance was mild and soft, far different from the generality of his race. A deep scar furrowed his cheek, and a sabre-cut had divided his left hand to the centre, rendering useless two of the fingers. On his right arm above the wrist was the scar of a bullet, and two of the fingers were broken. His dress externally was similar to that worn by all Arabs, consisting of the striped *abeh* and gay *kefiyeh*, bound with its rope of camel's hair. Underneath, however, he wore a silk robe of bright colours.

After hasty salutations we asked the cause of his delay. He assumed a look of surprise, and said, with all apparent sincerity, "Did you not tell me you would not go till to-morrow?" There was no use in quarrelling with him, and we were the more resigned as dark clouds, gathering on the summit of Hermon, and the distant murmur of the thunder, gave warning of rain. Having fixed the time of departure at sunrise the following morning, we separated for the day.

April 1st.—Scarcely had the first rays of the morning sun tinged the minaret tops when the growl of dromedaries was heard at the door, and 'Amer was ushered into the court. To strap on our stores, and arrange our saddles, was a work of some time. The dromedary's saddle is primitive in construction. It consists of two horns, one in front and the other behind, from a foot to a foot and a half in length, attached to sticks fitted to sit astride the animal's hump on a cushion of straw ; the whole apparatus being fastened by girths. This was no inviting seat as I first saw it ; but when coats and stuffed coverlets were arranged upon it, it was easy and comfortable.

We sent the animals to the East Gate, not wishing to endanger our limbs in riding along narrow streets, or our

heads in passing under low archways. I had often heard that the first mounting of a dromedary formed a kind of era in a man's life, and I confess that, when I saw mine with open mouth, growling, and struggling to free itself from the grasp of the driver, I felt a little trepidation. No sooner had I leaped into the saddle than the brute, giving a sharp lurch backwards, another forward, and another backwards, gained its feet and ran a few yards at a smart trot; it then wheeled about, and suddenly, by a reversed series of lurches, resumed its sitting posture. A second time it went through this pantomime, and was preparing for a third, when its driver seized and pinioned it by placing his foot upon its knee. 'Amer and Mr. Robson were at some distance when he let it free, but I was not long in reaching them. Though I had no difficulty in keeping my seat, thanks to the horns of my saddle, yet it was with no little anxiety I looked forward to a ride of nearly 200 miles on such an animal. The pace was dreadful when it trotted; and the sudden jerks in rising and sitting had almost dislocated my spine. In walking, however, when I became a little accustomed to the rocking motion, I found the pace easy, and even pleasant.

After a delightful ride across the plain of Damascus, and over one of the lower ridges of Antilebanon, we reached the village of Kuteifeh, where we were objects of no little curiosity to groups of men and boys who gathered round our dromedaries. My companion had retained his Frank costume, which in the eyes of the Arabs did not seem very picturesque; and some jokes were passed through the crowd of loungers at his expense. My own habiliments suited very well so long as I remained *in situ*; but when I dismounted, and the small dimensions of my nether garments became visible, laughter broke forth afresh. Notwithstanding my fatigue, which has a considerable influence upon the temper, I felt more inclined to enjoy than resent such indignities; and I entertained some doubts whether, had I appeared in like costume in any of the villages of England, a similar reception would not have awaited me.

After half an hour's halt we remounted and rode eastward along the plain to Mu'addamiyeh. It was our original intention to proceed to Jerûd the first day, but our dromedaries had behaved so badly, and travelled so slowly, that we found this impossible; we consequently determined to spend the night here. We proceeded to the house of the sheikh, and were welcomed by his son. We were ushered into the reception-room, which was soon filled with the chief men of the village, who had collected to see the strangers and drink coffee. A black slave was kept busy the whole evening roasting the coffee-beans, and pounding them in a quaintly-carved wooden mortar with a wooden pestle, like an Indian war-club. The Arabs are such connoisseurs in coffee, that they must have it fresh roasted and pounded each time it is served. Again and again, therefore, were we treated to this musical festival, for each round of visitors partook of the sheikh's hospitality.

It was a strange and picturesque assemblage that gathered round us in that old chamber; and a wilder-looking scene could scarcely be imagined than that which met our view when the crackling branches on the hearth threw a fitful flame upon the features and costumes of the Bedawîn. But the conversation had more interest for me than countenance or costume. The principal topic of discussion was the Frank visitors and their country. Some of those present, who assumed a kind of authority because they had seen half-a-dozen *Ingleze*, astonished the others by stories of their prowess and knowledge. The expulsion of the great Ibrahim Pasha by the fleets of England was well remembered, and the taking of Sidon and bombardment of Acre were spoken of as manifesting a greater than human power. As a crowning proof of unparalleled wisdom, one said: "As God is great! the English can go where they please by day or night, by land or sea; for they have an instrument that shows them the way to any place."

"*Wallah!* and is it so?" said the son of the sheikh, turning to us with a look of intense curiosity.

An appeal was made to us in verification of the statement.

I produced a pocket compass, and, placing it near the light, let them see how it always pointed the same way. It was turned, and turned again, but still it pointed to the *Kibleh*. After all had tried in vain to direct it to any other quarter, I took my knife, placed the point of the steel near the compass, and the needle turned towards my hand. I moved it round, but still the needle followed. "There is no God but God!" cried our young host. "The Franks have the power of *Janus*!" exclaimed an old man by his side.

The night wore on, and we spread our beds. Others followed our example, and strangers gradually withdrew: it was long, however, ere sleep came. The closeness of the room, the denseness of the smoke from the brush on the hearth, which the negro heaped on the embers, and the myriads of fleas that attacked us, drove sleep from our eyelids. I rose and walked out into the cool fresh air, and on my return found the negro asleep, the room deserted, save by seven or eight snorers, and the fire dead upon the hearth; throwing myself on my bed, I slept till the voice of 'Amer called us.

April 2nd.—The air was damp and cold as we mounted our dromedaries at the gate of the village at 6.25. The people were all astir. The Arabs are an early-rising race; but the truth is, there is little virtue in their early hours. Their beds are such that nothing but stern necessity would drive any man to them. They never undress. To loosen the girdle, pull the turban or camel's-hair rope more firmly down upon the brows, and wrap the goat's-hair cloak round the body, constitute their whole toilet arrangements before retiring to rest. Add to this the incessant attacks from myriads of fleas and sundry other animals, and it will be admitted that there is little self-denial in rising with the dawn.

At 8.15 we entered Jerûd, and, passing through its straight and clean streets, which present an agreeable contrast to those of most villages in this land, we dismounted at the house of Sheikh Fâres, the *Aga* or governor of the district. The court-yard was filled with a motley crowd of Arabs, all armed to the teeth; finely-formed horses

were picketed around, and sheafs of tufted spears stood in the corners. The scene was picturesque, but wild; and the piercing gaze and fierce countenances of the Arabs were calculated to give rise to feelings of doubt and dread in the minds of those about to trespass on their territories. But at the same time the proud step, flowing robes, and bright colours of the keffiyehs could not fail to elicit admiration. It is only within his own domain the *Bedawy* can be seen to advantage. In the city he is like a caged bird. His countenance is uneasy and restless, his gait constrained, and his whole mien betrays anxiety and distrust. When not engaged in business, he generally squats in some quiet corner, peering stealthily from beneath the folds of his keffiyeh at the crowd around him. But he is a different being when he breathes the desert air: his eye dilates, his frame becomes erect and commanding, and his step firm and free.

'Amer expected to find some of his tribe in Jerûd, but was disappointed. Having ascertained the position of their encampment, we resumed our march. Passing out of the gate, we struck across the fields, and, coming to a fountain, filled our water-skin. At the end of two hours we had on our left a mountain chain, which divides the plain. It continues to Kuryetein, and from thence takes an eastern course in an unbroken line to Palmyra. The regular route to that city is along the valley, on the northern side of the mountain-chain; we, however, took the route on the southern side through a narrower valley. The aspect of the country was now dreary and desolate: a few weeds and tufts of grass grew at intervals, but the intervening space was covered with fragments of flint and limestone. Not a tree, not a shrub, and not a living creature was within the range of vision. The barren soil beneath, white and glistening, the monotonous undulations of the plain, the naked slopes of the mountains around, and the deep, unclouded blue of the great vault overhead, from which the sun shone fiercely down, pouring a flood of light upon the whole—such was the unvaried panorama as we marched onward.

With silent footfall, and sweeping step, and ship-like motion, our dromedaries sped on. There was no path, no barrier reared by Nature or human hand to retard or turn them aside. Their course was direct, as if guided by compass. Often did I scan the country in the vain endeavour to descry some solitary wanderer or animal. None could be seen. About the hour of afternoon prayer 'Amer, who had for some time ridden in silence with Mohammed behind him, pulled off his boots and cloak, and thrust them into his saddle-bags. Thus disencumbered he leaped lightly from the dromedary, and ran to an eminence a little on the right. He now looked a new man. The transformation was wonderful. In the city he appeared like one over whose head nearly sixty summers had passed, leaving their impress on form and face. But in the desert his figure was erect, his step elastic, his eye bright, as a youth of twenty. His picturesque costume added to the juvenile appearance. His brilliant silk robe of alternate stripes of red and white hung in graceful folds: it was confined at the waist by a girdle of red morocco leather, round the front of which were brass cartridge tubes. The sleeves were wide and open to the elbow, and from beneath them hung down those of his shirt, long and pennon-like. His silk keffiyeh was of brilliant colours, and had a fringe of plaited cord more than a foot in depth. His finely-formed feet and limbs were naked. Such was 'Amer as he lightly and joyfully trod the desert soil; and such is the ordinary undress of Bedawy sheikhs: those, however, who are of the ruling family wear a short cloak of scarlet cloth, faced and trimmed with black fur.

When 'Amer reached the rising ground he scanned the plain and hills around, and then proceeded to another eminence. My curiosity being roused, I began to exercise my vision too, and detected far away on the left, on the mountain-sides, what appeared to be vast flocks, while farther still I could dimly discern black tents. I pointed them out to the Ageily, who was mounted on the sheikh's camel, but he made no reply, and seemed to think I was mistaken. 'Amer soon after came up, and remarked to his

attendant that he could not see them. I knew he was in search of some Arab encampment, and probably that of his own tribe. After satisfying myself on this point I directed his attention to the flocks in the distance ; he could not see them, but Mohammed admitted I was correct ; so, with a well-turned compliment on the sharpness of my vision, he mounted and rode to the tents.

At four o'clock we were in the midst of flocks and herds, and soon afterwards, overtopping an eminence, we saw before us black tents almost innumerable. We met an Arab wandering among the flocks ; but he passed without a salutation, and almost without a look at us. Some time after another passed near us, to whom 'Amer addressed a single question, receiving a brief answer. I gave him the usual desert salutation ; he started as if surprised, gave me a quick, fierce look, but no reply. This seemed no very pleasant introduction to Arab life. It took me by surprise ; it was so different from the polite salutations of the peasantry, and from my anticipations of the boasted hospitality of the Bedawin. I began to have gloomy forebodings that all might not be right. I did not then know what I afterwards learned, that this is Arab etiquette. When strangers approach an encampment in the desert, they wrap their cloaks round them, and conceal their faces in the folds of their keftiyehs. No word of salutation is addressed to them, and no question asked on either side. They guide their animals in silence to any tent they choose to select, being careful, however, not to pass close to any other, as it would be an insult not to claim the hospitality of the first ; they dismount without a word at the tent door, and from that moment become the guests and *protégés* of its owner. The reasons of this rather singular custom become apparent from a consideration of the peculiarities of Arab life. Blood feuds are of frequent occurrence, and there are few families which are not involved in them. When a stranger approaches an encampment, therefore, he knows not but that he may meet an enemy, and he consequently conceals his features till he reaches a place of safety. The

duties of hospitality are held so sacred, that no tribe or individual will salute or question an unknown stranger who claims it, lest they should discover in him one with whom they may have a blood feud. Once the stranger is within the precincts of a tent, his host is not only bound to supply his wants, but to defend him with his life.

We dismounted at the door of a tent in the centre of the encampment. No sooner had our sheikh touched the ground than he was affectionately embraced by his son, a fine boy of fifteen. This scene brought to my mind some incidents of Scripture, and seemed, in fact, to realize the narratives of patriarchal times. The youth placed his hands on his father's neck, and kissed each cheek, and then they leaned their heads for a few seconds on each other's shoulders. Precisely similar was the scene at the meeting of Jacob and Esau: "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, *and fell on his neck*, and kissed him." We were soon surrounded by a group of wild-looking Arabs, who manifested intense curiosity at our every movement. Our luggage was placed within the tent, and comfortable seats prepared by the hands of 'Amer himself, who cordially welcomed us to his desert home. The whole scene was new and strange. The tents grouped together on the bare soil, the flocks and herds browsing on every side, the picturesque costumes of those who tended or wandered forth among them, pictured vividly before our minds the days when Abraham dwelt in tents, and when Jacob led his family and flocks across this same desert. The tents are the same as those used in remote ages. An oblong piece of black hair-cloth, fastened to the ground by ropes and stakes at each end and along one side; several poles, seven or eight feet long, placed upon their ends, keep the centre at the proper elevation, and leave one side open—such is the tent of the Bedawy. The Bedawin, however, never call it a tent; its name with them is *house of hair*.

'Amer went to a neighbouring tent, occupied by his harim and younger children, to make ready, as we afterwards found, the feast for his guests. A lamb was brought from

the flock, slain at the tent-door, and the quivering members were handed over to his wife. Meanwhile a semi-circle of Arabs squatted in front of us: their appearance was far from pleasing; their dark faces, hollow cheeks, flashing eyes, tattered habiliments, and greasy black hair hanging in long plaits upon breast and shoulders, made up a *tout ensemble* more picturesque than agreeable. No word was addressed to us. They thought we did not understand their language, and for a time we did not undeceive them, that we might enjoy their remarks. There was no lack of signs and gestures, and by these they endeavoured to frighten us for their own sport—one, pointing to a spear that stood beside the tent, made a quick thrust expressive of running through one of us: another raised a huge club with an iron-spiked head, and examined its knobs, all the time throwing very significant glances at us; several others, stretching out their necks, drew their fingers across them with looks that could not be mistaken. We laughed at their acting, and showed them we enjoyed the pantomime excessively. We got so familiar by signs that our entertainers began to try words, shouting at the top of their voices to make them more intelligible. One youth, the most ferocious-looking among the group, demanded if we were Christians; we replied, Yes. He then said that his religion would count it commendable to kill us. Mr. Robson replied that, according to the words of the Prophet, he was wrong, for in the Korân Muslems were enjoined to take *head-money* from Christians, and spare their lives. They seemed astonished that infidels should know anything of their sacred book, but were more astonished still that we could understand and speak their language.

The sun went down; and the deep shadows of evening threw a stern grandeur over the landscape. Long lines of sheep and camels streaked plain and mountain, converging to the encampment. The wind blew cold as the daylight waned, and the flocks crowded close together round the tents of their masters, as if to engender warmth. A strange Bedawy, with an idiotic cast of features, came from the

neighbouring tent, carrying in his hand an instrument like a broken pickaxe. Passing through the circle of spectators, he advanced towards where we sat, and, when within a yard of us, raised his weapon and sunk it deep into the soil at our very knees. The act was done with such deliberation and quickness, that we started back as if the blow had been aimed at our heads. The Arabs laughed at our fright, but the operator took no notice, and laboured as if frantic, till he had excavated a considerable pit. Another Arab now came up, and threw in a few dry prickly shrubs; and, with match and tinder, soon had them in a blaze. A third threw a *cloakful* of dry camels' dung over the burning mass. The skirt of his under garment supplied the place of bellows, and fanned the heap into a flame. Thus they kindled the desert fire, and the half-naked Arabs gathered round it, spreading out their bony hands to catch the genial warmth, and rubbing them with evident satisfaction. Ever and anon one of the circle added fresh fuel, while others stirred the smouldering embers with their hooked sticks or clubs. The night wind, sweeping round the tent, made the flame leap and play like a thing of life, and sent showers of sparks and hot ashes into the beards of the circle, occasioning momentary confusion, followed by a grim laugh.

A signal from the other tent occasioned great bustle in the group before us. All rose, and elderly men, approaching from various quarters, saluted us respectfully. 'Amer, his son, and Mohammed appeared among them, and were followed by three Arabs, bearing a dish, nearly four feet in diameter, on which was a huge pile of rice, with the members of a sheep scattered round the sides, and a large crater-like cavity in the summit, filled with melted butter. This was placed as near us as the fire would permit. We were invited to commence the banquet; and several elders of the tribe, with Mohammed, after much pressing, were persuaded to sit down with us. Our host sat at a respectful distance; his son and two or three smaller children close beside him. It is Arab etiquette for the host to be served last of all.

The mode in which we ate was as primitive as the banquet. Each sunk his fingers into the pile of rice, made up a portion of it into a ball, dipped it in the butter, and swallowed it. A venerable sheikh who sat beside me, seizing one of the choicest pieces of the sheep, tore off a handful of the flesh, and presented it to me with the usual word of invitation and compliment. Fully sensible of the honour done me, I thanked him, and ate the savoury morsel. Each one round now seemed desirous of emulating him in politeness, and we were deluged with these tit-bits till nature could hold out no longer. Under other circumstances it might have been quite as agreeable to have used our own hands in the process of carving and feeding, especially as it was impossible to ascertain how many weeks had passed since those of our entertainers had enjoyed the luxury of a wash ; but those who are in the desert, if they would not be laughed at, must follow desert customs.

When we had withdrawn, another relay sat down ; and these were followed by another, until the mountain became a valley of dry bones. It was only when all had eaten and were satisfied that 'Amer and his son ventured to gather up the fragments. Poor fellows ! their fare was but scanty.

As the evening advanced the circle of our visitors enlarged. The fitful blaze but half revealed the wild figures that squatted round, and dimly showed the beautifully formed heads and soft eyes of two or three mares that gazed familiarly on the assembly, and the faint outline of camels picketed in the background. We were entertained with tales of Arab life and warfare, of forays and reprisals, of the speed and endurance of matchless and priceless mares, whose unbroken genealogies and untold perfections the whole tribe were proud of. We were questioned about our own land—how many days' journey it was distant ?—if there were horses, and camels, and tents, and Bedawin there ? Many a muttered *wullah* passed round the circle as we explained to them our mode of travel by land and sea. At last our host and chief, with a thoughtfulness we scarcely expected from the hardy desert child, advised us to spread

our beds and sleep. Weary and shaken with a long ride we were glad to follow his advice, and stretch our limbs on the hard ground. Wrapping round us our heavy cloaks, we were soon asleep.

April 3rd.—A bed on the stony soil tends to promote early rising; and for once at least I was thankful for it. The encampment, as viewed in the grey morning light, was one vast forest of camels, with a dense underwood of sheep and goats. Presently the whole was in motion. The smaller animals assembled in groups, obedient to the call of their masters, and followed them away into the distance. Thus disappeared flock after flock, each knowing and following its own shepherd. Occasionally the masses mingled, and for a few moments united; but this caused no confusion, for “a stranger will they not follow: they know not the voice of a stranger.” The Arab maids in their graceful robes, each a model for a sculptor, went forth from their tents to milk the sheep and camels, and returned with the pails upon their heads. It was a pastoral and patriarchal scene, and well repaid us for an early start.

An attempt at trade in camels between 'Amer and Mohammed detained us some time; and, had it not been for threats and entreaties on our part, would probably have kept us all day. Our sheikh's dromedary had now to be coaxed from its associates, with which it had wandered over the plain, and it was 7.15 ere we were prepared to mount. Leaping into the saddle, I bade adieu to our friends, and followed our little party to the tent of the sheikh of the tribe, with whom 'Amer had some business to transact ere he left. A slave was sent to invite us to enter and drink coffee; but as the sheikh did not come himself, we declined. In a few minutes we were marching along the undulating plain. Barren mountain-chains still shut in the view on each side: those on the right rising apparently to a table-land. Some distance in front the ranges converged, leaving only a narrow gorge between. Toward this we bent our course.

In an hour and a half we descended into a plain resembling a vast amphitheatre. Before us, on the left, rose

two conical hills, called '*Abd* and '*Abdeh*. Northward of these, about two hours distant, lies the village of Kuryetein. The landscape was desolate: the flinty plain and grey mountain-slopes did not present a single interesting feature. There was no shade to vary the scene, for the sun had mounted high in the heavens, and the hills sloped easily to their rounded summits. We felt that we were in the desert; and we felt too that our little party could offer but a feeble resistance to the fierce bands that frequently scour it. Often did our eyes sweep the panorama, and carefully did we examine every heap of stones and projecting rock, lest it might conceal lurking bandits. The excitement thus kept up relieved the monotony, and counteracted the sleep-inducing pace of our dromedaries.

I had been examining for some moments the singular forms of '*Abd* and '*Abdeh*, when my attention was attracted by a black line emerging from behind the latter. I directed '*Amer's* attention to it, but he could see nothing. The dark line increased in length, and was evidently a moving body. Our chief eagerly inquired whether they were foot or horsemen, but the distance was so great I could only guess from the quick motion that they were mounted. Mohammed was now called, and, leaping lightly to '*Amer's* side, he pronounced them to be a party of cavaliers. '*Amer* conducted us behind a rising ground to escape observation; but it was too late—the eagle eye of the Arab had already detected us. A horseman was seen to separate from the main body. At first he appeared like a bird skimming the ground; and the rapid pace at which he swept down the gentle slope favoured the illusion. The outline of the horse at length became visible; then the form of the rider crouched close to his back; then the tufted spear: and ere we had surmounted the rising ground the tattered Arab reined up his steed within fifty yards of us. I had viewed this scene with lively interest. Never before had I seen the Arab horse on his native desert; and however exciting were the circumstances, and however calculated to awaken suspicion of coming danger, perhaps of plunder, admiration was the

only feeling I entertained. And when the stranger drew up, and his mare stood patient and gentle, without symptom of weariness or quickness of breathing, but with expanded nostril and proud eye, I could see at once why the Arab loves his horse. The horse is everything to him. Money he cannot use to advantage; his simple wants are easily supplied. His few sheep or camels gather their food from a parched soil which no other lord claims. A genial clime makes rich clothing—such a costly toy to the denizens of the city and to civilized nations—of little use to him. A tattered garment will serve him for years, and the simple furniture of his tent is hereditary. What, therefore, would money be to him? But his horse will carry him swiftly over the parched desert, to the side of devoted caravan or solitary wanderer; and, when danger threatens, will as swiftly convey him beyond its reach.

'Amer replied briefly to a question of the stranger; the *salâm* was mutually given; and the Arab was in a few minutes more with his tribe.

At 10.50 we were sweeping along the plain at the southern base of 'Abd. Here we met a portion of the tribe, with the sheikh at its head, arrayed in a scarlet cloak, and splendidly mounted on a white mare. Friendly greetings were interchanged, and the tobacco-pouch of Mohammed lightened; and we went on our journey in peace. Large droves of sheep and camels, with a number of young colts, covered the plain; while women and children appeared here and there, perched on the backs of camels, and surrounded with piles of cooking vessels. In a long march the women often prepare the food on the camels' backs, and serve it out to their husbands, brothers, or sons. The *harîms* of the principal sheikhs presented a singular and picturesque appearance. Two long poles, ornamented with tassels and variegated drapery, are laid across the back of some favourite dromedary, which is itself adorned with shells, tassels, and fringes. A small palanquin, with curtains of scarlet cloth gaily embroidered, is placed in the centre, and in this sit the wives and children. At a distance these machines look like

gigantic birds with outstretched wings floating over the surface of the ground. The females did not by any means manifest the same coyness as village belles, but looked eagerly at us with uncovered faces, and some of them even welcomed us to their native desert.

We soon after entered a glen, whose sloping sides were carpeted with anemone, iris, and other flowers, while the summits were crowned, far overhead, with naked cliffs. After a gentle ascent and quick descent, this glen led us, in about half an hour, into a deep wady, running at right angles to our route. We observed as we entered it a single dromedary coming down the opposite side, accompanied by a man on foot. As soon as 'Amer learned that there was at least one man mounted, he prepared for action. A pair of old pistols, hitherto shut up in his saddle-bags, were drawn out, fresh primed, and thrust into his belt. A club, his only other weapon, was handed to Mohammed. Thus equipped we approached our suspected foes. As we drew near we perceived that there were three, all well armed. The man mounted in front had a long matchlock, the match of which he lit; his companion carried a spear, and the footman a club. Our chief, seeing the odds against him, eagerly asked whether we carried pistols, and, on being answered in the affirmative, advanced with renewed confidence. I confess, however, that I felt rather doubtful about the propriety of risking an engagement. 'Amer's old pistols I knew could not be depended on, and, even should they chance to go off, would be as likely to shoot himself as his opponent, for they had been loaded for more than three months. Mr. Robson and I had only one pistol between us; this, however, was double-barreled, and, I felt confident, would not miss fire, which was more than the Bedawy could say of his gun. On we went in full expectation of a fight. There was a short parley at a distance of some fifty yards, during which our foes examined us, calculating their chances of success. We took good care to exhibit our armament, and a sight of this apparently led them to conclude that it might be as safe to let us pass; and we separated without a word.

Arabs in the desert are never afraid of large companies or moving tribes, except they are foes with whom they have a blood feud; but they always fear stragglers. These generally leave their tribe for the sake of plunder, and as they conceal their faces it is impossible to identify them, and there is therefore no hope of restitution or retaliation. When a robber of this kind is killed in the act of robbing another, his own people disown him, and there is no blood feud. It is against such as these that travellers must be on their guard in the desert. A mere exhibition of fire-arms will generally frighten them; for they know they are outlaws, and may be shot with impunity. Against a large party, however, it is worse than useless to attempt resistance; these are the acknowledged guards of their tribe, and they consider it their right to plunder all who enter their territory without permission. The best policy is to yield to them with a good grace, and under ordinary circumstances they will be satisfied with a liberal *bakhshish*.

From the valley we ascended to a table-land. Unlike the flinty plains we had traversed, it was covered with long thin grass and prickly shrubs; while blue and red iris, convolvulus of various colours, and a small yellow flower whose name I did not know, were sprinkled over it. In front rose a conical peak that attracted our attention. The top seemed capped with a deep shadow, and the sides were speckled with similar shadows. Closer examination showed that this singular appearance was produced by differently coloured strata. The surrounding country, plain and mountains, was composed of white limestone, mixed with beds and nodules of flint; but this peak was of sandstone, of lighter and darker hues, from a dull red to a faint pink colour. It is called by the Arabs *Jebel el-Kehâleh*.

When parallel with this mountain we came to the brow of a long and steep slope, forming the head of a valley that stretched eastward to the horizon. Lofty mountain-ranges, with bold and rugged features, shut it in on each side. The dry bed of a winter torrent meandered through it, and from our commanding position we could trace it as it wound

along like a thread of silver until lost in the distance. The rounded pebbles of white limestone that glistened in its bed contrasted well with the verdure of its banks, now carpeted with grass after the winter's rain.

When we reached the valley our patient animals seemed suddenly to feel the pangs of hunger, or perhaps they were lured by the tempting food; for their course became erratic and they stretched their long slender necks from side to side, cropping the juicy weed or tuft of grass. The increasing roll of their walk, and the sharp jerk of their trot, were bad enough for our weary bones; but when we began to be treated to these interludes the motion became almost too much for endurance. I was indeed beginning to feel angry enough to beat my dromedary into better behaviour and more steady conduct, when other matters came in for a share of my attention. In examining the country, Mohammed's eagle-eye detected the heads of two men behind a mound in the distance, and at once pronounced them robbers—rather prematurely as I thought, for I could only perceive two dark spots, which might have been stones. 'Amer determined not to run into a trap, but, if robbers they were, to ascertain their strength and draw them from their ambush. Tapping his dromedary on the neck, he turned it aside from the centre of the valley towards the mountains on the left, and proceeded at a quick pace. We had not gone far when the heads disappeared, and presently two men were seen on the other side of the mound, running across to intercept us. There was now no doubt as to their character and intentions: there were but the two, however, and, unless armed with guns, we cared little for them. They came up at a rapid pace as we resumed our route—their cloaks were carefully folded, and their kefiyehs so drawn over the face as to leave nothing exposed but their eyes. No weapon could be seen save the knobs of clubs over their right shoulders. 'Amer dismounted, club in hand, and told us to be on our guard. When within fifty yards, the strangers asked who we were. 'Amer replied that we were Arabs on our way to Tadmor. They then attempted to approach close to

him, but he drew one of his old pistols to show he knew their intentions, and as an intelligible hint that they must keep a safe distance. This had the desired effect, and as they retreated one of them loosed the folds of his cloak, revealing the hilt of a sword and the handle of a pistol.

We now passed undulating ground, intersected by deep ravines, and having conical chalk hills at intervals. Mohammed was sent out in front as advance guard, to give notice of danger; and we were enjoined not to sing, or even talk except in whispers. On we swept in silence—the cushioned feet of the dromedaries descending noiselessly on the light soil. Our eyes scanned anxiously every nook and corner of the landscape, in the expectation of detecting some lurking bandit, and then turned again in half disappointment to the lovely little flowers that carpeted our path, and that seemed “born to blush unseen, and waste their sweetness on the desert air.” The scenery was grand, but it was the grandeur of desolation; it was unvarying, and therefore monotonous. A shout from the Ageily, whom we could see standing on the summit of a mound a quarter of a mile in front, made us quicken our pace. We swept round the base of the little *tell*, and saw in the distance a clump of Arab tents, occupying a verdant nook at the entrance of a ravine. The sun was fast sinking, and the hills on our left, enveloped in deep shadow, assumed a wild and gloomy aspect. We had begun to anticipate the hardships of a night in the open air, without water and without shelter from the cold blast. It may be imagined, then, how the sight of these few tents cheered us, and with what pleasure we urged on our weary animals.

As we approached the encampment we wrapped our cloaks round us, and concealed our faces in the ample folds of our keffiyehs. We advanced directly to the largest tent, which stood a short distance from the others, and dismounting in silence spread our carpets and cloaks in the tent-door and took our places. Not a word was addressed to us, and a circle of four or five elders, who squatted a few yards off, scarcely looked at us as we made our simple

arrangements, and claimed, uninvited, their hospitality. 'Amer and Mohammed advanced to the circle of Arabs, who rose to receive them, and gave them the ordinary salutation. They all now approached and bade us welcome. A circle was formed as usual, but there was little conversation. There were but a few tents, and their occupants seemed poor. Their flocks were not numerous, and I saw only one horse. They had probably separated from some larger tribe. The other end of the tent, occupied by the women, presented a very different aspect from the quiet and silence of our department. All was bustle and hurry there. Two women sat down to grind at the mill; a third shook a skin of milk that was suspended to the top of the tent, to prepare butter for the evening's repast; others arranged the fires and brought forth the largest cooking vessels. The result of their labours was soon apparent, for ere the brief twilight had passed a large dish of *burghul* was set before us, with a profusion of melted butter. The people were too poor to afford a lamb or even a kid, and they presented the best they had. Hungry as we were, we could scarcely taste this rude fare; we tried however to swallow a few mouthfuls, and the increasing darkness favoured our attempts at politeness.

April 4th.—We were up with the dawn, and in the saddle ten minutes after. We had no toilets to attend to, and the Arabs never eat breakfast. We found, however, that, early as we were, some of the ladies were before us, and had already set out in the grey light with donkeys and waterskins to bring water from a distant well.

The morning was bitterly cold; and, though we made use of all our coats, and covered up our feet, we could scarce keep out the cutting blast. The cry of robbers soon claimed our attention. Three men were observed attempting to intercept us. To escape or avoid them was impossible, and so we made ready to meet and resist them. They came upon us as the others had done, but one of them carried a matchlock. 'Amer gave the club to the Ageily, and told us to prepare for attack. They were soon near us, but our valiant

chief was on the ground to meet them. With a pistol in each hand he confronted the advancing marauders. Seeing they still approached, I threw off my cloak and drew a pistol, and Mohammed flourished his club. When they saw us determined to resist, one of them dropped behind his companions, and the others only followed us a few paces farther. The whole scene was a pantomime—not a word was spoken : each party carefully scanned the opposite, and calculated the probabilities of an encounter. • The others seemed to think the chances of success in our favour, and we were heartily glad it was so. It is an inconvenient habit Arab robbers have of stripping their victims of every stitch of clothing, however rich may have been their baggage and however full their purse. During my short experience in Syria I have known more than one instance in which even ladies have shared the fate of their lords in this respect.

At nine o'clock we were in the midst of vast herds and a large encampment. Our chief met a friend, who invited us to his tent. The offer was too tempting to be refused, though it led us some distance out of our route. We were ere long comfortably seated in a capacious tent, with a dish before us filled with dates, and having in the centre a cake of snowy butter. Such a mixture I had never before seen or heard of, but it is common with the Bedawin, and we found it excellent. Before leaving Damascus we had heard that the Baghdad caravan had been plundered, and now we were partaking of the spoil, the invited guests of the robbers. The affair looked bad enough in *theory*, but then we had ridden nearly four hours without breakfast, and our entertainers thought, moreover, that they had a right to the contents of the caravan. It was scarcely a suitable time for us to enter on a discussion of ethical questions. Trespassers are often severely punished in England, and why may not the Bedawin borrow a leaf from the English code? The laws of the desert, it is true, are somewhat severe, and their execution summary. All goods found within the borders of a tribe are confiscated. But these laws are of great antiquity and universally known ; all therefore who break them *must*

bear the consequences. There is another fact which tends to palliate this so-called crime. Every Arab tribe will, for a very small percentage, guarantee the safety of a caravan through its territory. It is only when one tribe gets the monopoly of conveyance, and refuses to others their just rights, that caravans are attacked and plundered.

After a rest of forty minutes we resumed our journey, and the black tents and flocks were left behind. Our course was still in the valley. Towards noon a voice hailed us from the opposite side of a ravine, along which for a time we had travelled. I knew not what questions were asked, but never before had I seen so wild and savage-looking a specimen of humanity. His whole wardrobe was composed of the tattered fragment of a blue shirt; his head was bare, but Nature had covered it with a thick crop of hair, that flowed in long elf-locks over breast and shoulders; his voice was shrill and piercing, even for an Arab; and his questions were asked with the abruptness peculiar to his race, and in a tone that seemed accustomed to command. A short spear was his only weapon, and on this he leaned as he shrieked his queries across the gorge that separated us.

Mohammed, who was still acting as avant-guard, had been for some time out of sight, and 'Amer manifested considerable anxiety about him on being told that several men were in sight in the direction from which our late friend had come. "Ya Mohammed! Ya Mohammed!" he shouted, and his voice resounded across the plain; but no Mohammed responded or appeared. We rode on between low mounds of naked reddish earth. At last on surmounting an eminence we observed, in the distance, black tents and moving flocks covering nearly the whole valley, while groups of cavaliers dashed about among them in mimic warfare. And there at our feet was Mohammed gazing on the exciting scene.

We were now marching close to the base of the northern line of mountains, and had the greater part of the valley, here some four or five miles wide, on our right. We could see that about four hours more would bring us into the great plain on the east. The character and features of the

country were far different from my early impressions of the road to "Tadmor in the Wilderness." Fancy had pictured a boundless plain covered with shifting sand, without a blade of grass or a green weed to break the monotony. I had pictured a solitary palm-tree shading a fountain, all alone in the midst of the dreary expanse. But here were mountain-ranges, and wild ravines, and winding vales; and the whole covered, scantily it is true, with tufts of grass, and shrubs, and flowers of brightest hue. There was no sand, and there were no palm-trees. In no way did it accord with my idea of a desert, save in this—there were no settled inhabitants and no traces of them.

At 1.45, as we were passing a large tent in the outskirts of an encampment, a friendly voice cried, "Ya 'Amer! Ya 'Amer! Hauwel! Hauwel!" and in a moment more our chief was in the arms of an aged Arab. Another and another came up and went through the same ceremony. It was impossible to resist the importunities of these hospitable men. We *must* dismount—sheep must be slain—banquets must be prepared in honour of the arrival of 'Amer and the strangers. Our dromedaries were seized and pulled to the ground, and we were all but dragged from their backs and transported into the tent. Long and loud did we remonstrate. We had expected to reach Palmyra in the evening, and this was no pleasant place for us to spend the afternoon. It was in vain, and so, when we could do nothing else, we quietly sat down on our carpets to await the will of our masters.

We were scarcely seated when we observed a young man bind on his sandals and set off at speed. In half an hour he returned bearing a lamb on his shoulders. The animal was soon stretched upon the ground and slaughtered. Stripped of its skin with Arab despatch, the quivering body was handed over to the tenants of the harīm.

The whole of this scene was regarded by Mr. Robson and myself with deep interest. It seemed as if we had been carried back 3000 years, and were permitted to mingle with the people of patriarchal times. The salutations were

such as had been familiar to us from childhood in the simple stories of Abraham, Jacob, and Laban. Here was the aged sheikh sitting in his tent-door watching for wayfarers—here was the generous hospitality that would constrain us to remain until we had partaken of refreshments—here were the flocks from which the lamb was brought—here was the almost inconceivable expedition with which it was killed and dressed and served up with *butter and milk*.

Wishing to wander among the tents and take a look at the private life and social habits of the Bedawin, I set out alone. I had not proceeded far, however, when I was attacked by fierce dogs. Standing on the top of a heap of stones I managed to keep them at a distance for a time; but every moment increased the number of my assailants, and I know not what might have been the result had not two women come to my rescue. I thanked my fair allies in the best manner I could, and they in their turn invited me to their tents, which were close by. I did not quite understand Arab etiquette on this point, and consequently declined. I well knew that, if their lords at all resembled the Muslims of the cities, they would not wish to have their harlms visited in their absence. The invitations given me were very pressing, and the promises held out such as no Arab could have withstood: dates, leben, butter, milk, and honey, were all mentioned among the dainties to which they would treat me. But I would not be persuaded, and requested one of my kind friends to escort me back to my tent.

I have often heard it said that Arab women are generally ugly. I cannot agree with this statement. I have seen many of them in different places, and belonging to different tribes, and in general I have found their features regular, and even handsome. Their bodies are finely proportioned, and their carriage and walk easy and graceful. All have that rich, black, lustrous eye that is only seen in perfection in the East. The forehead is open and high, and the eyebrows beautifully arched. The mouth is well formed, with proudly curved lines, but is disfigured by the custom of staining the under lip dark blue. The braided hair is

almost covered by a black veil that hangs over the shoulders, the corner being frequently brought forward to cover the lower part of the face. The dress consists of a long, loose, blue robe of coarse calico. It is drawn closely round the throat, has wide hanging sleeves, and sweeps the ground like a train. Bracelets of gold or silver adorn the arms, and large rings and drops hang from the ears; a few wear the nose-jewel. This simple costume is admirably adapted to display the symmetry of their form and gracefulness of their movements: it causes no restraint or stiffness, but, allowing full play to nature, leaves all the proportions of the body to be developed. The votaries of fashion in the more polished nations of the West might imitate, to some extent, and with great advantage, the simple attire of these daughters of the desert.

It is true, beauty only lasts here while the bloom of youth is on the cheek and health gives elasticity and fulness to the frame. The noble matron, to whose countenance the lines of time give even more real beauty, and to whose form the staidness of advancing age adds fresh dignity, is not found in the desert. The aged Arab women are ugly, and there is a malignity in the glance of their piercing eyes, and in the general expression of their sharp features and withered faces, that reminds one of Macbeth's witches. Still this does not arise from the character of the costume; there are other causes to which it must be attributed. It is the light of the intellect beaming in the countenance which makes beauty perennial in civilized lands. It is the mind, enlarged by education, refined by social intercourse, sanctified by religion, which makes the matrons of England so eminently graceful. When the roses fade upon the cheek and the fresh fulness leaves the form, a beauty of a higher and nobler kind takes their place. Intelligence beams from the eyes, and animates each feature; benignity and love are enshrined in every smile; the magic influence of conversation, which displays all the resources of a cultivated mind and all the deep feelings of a regenerated soul, gives the Christian lady a charm above that of earth. The light of religion does not shine upon

the daughters of Ishmael. Christianity has not raised the powers of their minds to nobler or holier objects than the tending of their flocks and the care of their tents ; and neither has it touched the heart to unbind the deep and tender emotions latent there. The beauty of the Arab girl is that of the spring flower, which withers under the summer's sun, and dies when the blast of autumn blows upon it.

We had the sumptuous evening repast, and the bright camp-fire, and the picturesque circle round it, and the tales of successful forays ; but all these could not withdraw our thoughts from Tadmor. We could not forget that it was still before us, and only a few hours distant. We spoke of it in our own tongue, heedless of the inquiring faces around us, and wondered whether it would disappoint our anticipations. To prepare for an early start, we wrapped ourselves in our abeihs, and tried to sleep. The wind blew loud ; currents, bitterly cold, came sweeping over our faces ; the old tent swayed and flapped ; and sleep, though courted, refused to come. I turned on my hard couch, as a last resource, but this made matters worse. A little group had gathered round the declining fire, crouching close to the warm embers. 'Amer was there, with anxiety, as I imagined, pictured in his countenance. He talked earnestly, and in low tones, with those who sat near him—mostly old men. I could occasionally gather a few words, and these did not tend to induce that repose of mind conducive to sleep. To-morrow's journey was the subject of conversation : some difficulty was in the way—some danger seemed to threaten. The mountains were named, and the plain was spoken of ; but in what connexion I could not comprehend. My attention was roused, and I tried, but in vain, to catch the varying tones, and to follow the hasty words. Imagination, also, came into play, and fancy pictured dangers and adventures. A gloomy impression was left upon my mind, and I had not vigour enough, weary as I was, to overcome it.

April 5th.—A gentle touch on the shoulder made me start from sleep. It was yet dark, and I was in that half-

conscious state in which one often finds himself when suddenly roused from heavy slumber. I knew not where I was, or why disturbed, and no object was visible to indicate my whereabouts. The deep growl of a dromedary, and the voice of 'Amer calling us to mount, soon brought me from the land of dreams. A cold and cutting blast blew in my face as I left the tent, and sent me back for my coat; over this, when seated on the impatient animal, I threw the ample folds of an abeih, and, thus protected against the intense cold, I joined my companions. The first grey streak was spreading along the eastern horizon as we bade adieu to our hospitable entertainers.

It was 5.20 when we left the tent, and our path lay near the base of the northern mountains, to which we gradually approached. Some of the ravines that furrow their sides are deep and wild. At 6.25 we turned to the left, up a narrow, deep, and rocky defile. The mysterious conversation of the previous night now recurred to me, and, glancing down the valley to the right, I saw several encampments in the distance. I inquired if we were not going along the valley to the plain beyond, and if that were not the easiest and best route. 'Amer replied that this was shorter; but the Ageily added that there were robbers on the other. I at once said that, if those were they in the distant tents, they had seen and were pursuing us, as some horsemen were now coming up from them at a fast pace. 'Amer showed neither fear nor anxiety at this intelligence; but whether his confidence arose from the nature of the defile, or from the close proximity of his friends, or from a knowledge of the Arabs themselves, I cannot tell.

In a few minutes more we were climbing a difficult zigzag path. Lofty cliffs with jagged summits towered far overhead, and straggling prickly shrubs, shooting out from chinks and crevices, added wildness to the scene. The way was difficult for camels, and more than once did I fear the unwieldy animals would have toppled over when scaling a steep slope, or passing along a shelving ridge. I did not feel at ease when I considered the whole matter; I knew

that an easier, if not a shorter, way to Tadmor would have been round the eastern end of the mountain-chain; and, if so, it was no small matter would send our sober chief over such a pass as this. The strange consultations of the previous night still kept my mind uneasy. The talk about the "mountains" and the "plain" now seemed half explained, and I looked forward with anxiety to the conclusion of our journey.

When we reached the top of the pass and the narrow summit of the ridge, a view of vast extent opened up before us. At our feet was a broad plain, perfectly flat, extending away to the west far as the eye could see. Beyond it, on the north, rose a bold chain of white mountains, whose rugged sides were furrowed by ravines, and partially covered with oak forests. On the east, at the distance of several hours, the two parallel chains, that on the north, and the one on whose summit we now stood, turned in their course, and converged so as to leave but a narrow pass into the desert beyond.

"Where is Tadmor?" we eagerly inquired, as we gazed on this panorama.

"Yonder," said our guide, pointing with his hooked stick to the vista in the eastern hills.

We strained our eyes in vain. The ruins of the city of Zenobia were either obscured by the distance or covered by the intervening hills.

As we descended 'Amer asked me, with apparent anxiety, if I saw any tents, or flocks, or Arabs in the plain. I could see none. On the far side, immediately below an oak forest, were a number of black spots resembling tents; but Mohammed pronounced them trees: and perhaps he was correct.

"Yonder hills," said 'Amer, pointing to the opposite range, distant about twelve miles—"yonder hills are called *Jebel el-Abiad*. Among them live a fierce and warlike people, whom we are not able to subdue. They have guns and horses; they live in stone houses and villages, and they never wander free like us."

"Are they cultivators of the soil, or do they merely feed flocks like the Bedawîn?" I asked.

"They are all shepherds, and never plant or sow," was his reply.

This was new information, and I doubted, and still doubt, its accuracy. There are undoubtedly a few straggling villages in the desert between northern Syria and the Euphrates; and if we are to credit Berghaus's map, we might conclude that there are few districts in western Asia more densely inhabited. I had never heard before that there was any district in that region so thickly peopled as 'Amer represented. He could not have meant the Jacobites of Süddüd, and the two or three little villages near it, for these are far to the westward, and in the plain. I do not think, however, that 'Amer would tell a deliberate falsehood; there was nothing to provoke it. It is probable that this district, like the *Safa*, is naturally strong and difficult of access, and that some Arab tribe has, from time immemorial, held possession of it, and there pastured flocks and herds, secure against the depredations of the desert hordes. There may be also half-ruined towns and villages similar to those in the Lejâh, among which the people find shelter for their families and flocks.

At seven o'clock we reached the plain, and turned towards the break in the eastern mountains. The ground was barren and gravelly, and the surface slightly undulating. In the ravines and vales among the hills on the right were jungles of brushwood, with some dwarf oaks; and in many places there appeared to be excellent pasturage. I could perceive no vestiges of former cultivation on plain or mountains; no green spot that marked the presence of stream or fountain; and no ruin or cairn to show that man had ever dwelt here. All was dreary, desolate, and blasted, as if a curse hung over it. The geological features of this whole region are uniform, the mountain ridges being composed of calcareous limestone of a soft texture, and the plains covered with fragments of this rock, intermixed with pieces of flint. The sun's rays during summer destroy all vegetation. There

is want of colour in the landscape ; and as during the day there is no light and shade to *bring out* the bolder features of the mountains, and no clouds to vary the blue of the firmament above, or to throw a temporary gloom over sections of the panorama below, the whole scene is dreary and monotonous.

The day was bright and sultry, and the heated air danced and quivered on the surface of the ground, like ripples on a lake. Every shrub and rock appeared as if in motion. In the distance the mirage exerted its magic influence, converting the parched soil into expanses of water, fringed with grass and waving reeds. While contemplating this strange and interesting phenomenon, I perceived something moving as if through the water towards us ; I could see, or at least I thought so, the splash of each footstep. Nearer and nearer it came, till, on reaching the shore-line, its form became more defined, and I told 'Amer of the approach of a swift dromedary. Anxiety was again pictured in his features as he asked from whence it came, and whether it was alone. The old pistols were once more in requisition and the club was given to Mohammed, while we were told to prepare for war.

The dromedary drew near, and a cold *salâm* was interchanged between 'Amer and the rider. Our chief evidently knew the stranger, and I heard him inquire as he passed where his tribe was. He pointed with his short spear northward across the plain, and said they were yonder, at the foot of the mountains. 'Amer now turned his dromedary in that direction, and proceeded thus till the stranger was out of sight, when he again struck to the right in nearly an opposite course, taking advantage of a shallow wady to escape observation. We could not of course fully understand these manoeuvres, and our leader was not communicative. We suspected, however, that there was danger to be anticipated from the northward.

At ten o'clock we reached low chalk hills, which extend from the base of the mountains some distance into the plain. The best and most direct route for us was to the

left of these, but 'Amer struck in among them, and proceeded in a winding course through the valleys. This made it still more evident that he dreaded the tribe of which he had heard; and we now saw that his object was to get to Tadmor by skirting the base of the mountains to the right, and probably crossing into the plain eastward. As we passed along the side of one of the little hills, I saw, away in the opening to the east, what appeared to be a castle crowning one of the brows of the northern mountain-ridge, and below it I could distinguish several lofty buildings. 'Amer stretched out his hand towards these buildings, and, looking round at us, said, "There is Tadmor." Eagerly did we fix our eyes on the longed-for spot, and try to distinguish the form and character of the ruins. Doubts and fears were in a moment dispelled from our minds. The buildings could not be more than an hour distant, and already in pleasant anticipation, we were in the midst of those colonnades and porticoes, and proud memorials of the wealth and power of bygone ages. Columns, and friezes, and tottering walls, and sculptured stones, half buried in the desert sands, were before the mind's eye. We rejoiced to picture the nature of the first impressions the ruins would make upon us, and we talked of the diligence with which every moment would be employed in the examination of details.

In a few minutes more we were sweeping round the base of the last of the chalk hills, when a shrill cry from the rocky mountain overhead caused us all to start.

"What means that shout?" said 'Amer to Mohammed.

"I know not," he replied, "but I suppose it is some shepherd calling to his fellows in the plain."

As we passed the tall tuft of a spear was observed on the opposite side, and a moment after an Arab drew up his fiery steed some twenty yards from us. He addressed a hasty question to 'Amer, which I did not hear. We all stopped, in the full consciousness that something serious was impending. Another horseman now galloped up, and, after speaking a few words to the former, rode off at speed

across the plain. His companion, without uttering a word, turned and walked away slowly after him, and we silently followed.

"What is this?" said I to my companion; "where are we going now?"

"I fear," said Mr. Robson, "that we are no longer our own masters, and that we are just going wherever that cavalier may lead."

We demanded of 'Amer the meaning of this scene, but he seemed either not to hear or not to heed the question, and he looked absent and dejected. Presently, however, the Ageily came close to Mr. Robson, and said, in a low voice:

"They are robbers, and will plunder you; but give me your purse, and it will be safe."

This was no agreeable information, but still we thought, Will two rob us? Can we not defy them, and hasten to Tadmor, which is not far distant? 'Amer, however, made no display of his old pistols, and conveyed to us no word of command or encouragement. He had evidently no thought of resistance, whatever was the character or number of our enemies.

It was a time of intense anxiety to us all. The horseman had disappeared, but his companion hovered near us. Ten minutes had scarcely passed when a cloud of dust was seen across the plain, as if raised and borne along by the whirlwind's blast. Swiftly and steadily it approached, and our eyes were riveted upon it, while we held our breath in suspense. At last it seemed to break, and to our dismay revealed some thirty horsemen, armed with spears and matchlocks, bearing down upon us. They were a wild and savage-looking group. They had thrown aside their abeihs, and had no covering but the loose open shirts, which now streamed in tatters behind them, leaving brawny legs and arms quite naked. Most of them, too, had cast off the keftiyeh, and their long plaited hair mingled with the streamers of their scanty garments. They looked more like demons than men, as they clung to the bare backs of their horses and brandished their tufted spears.

'Amer had, in the mean time, fallen behind, and dismounted from his dromedary, and my unruly animal wandered to the front, and appeared eager to meet the foe. The honour of the van was thus, unintentionally, and certainly unsought, assigned to me—or, rather, assumed by my quixotic dromedary. Mr. Robson was close behind, but there was no time for communication or consultation. Mohammed, I observed, had caught the stirrup of the Arab who had remained with us. In the rear of the advancing troop was a stout man, in a silk robe and scarlet cloak. His bright keffiyeh was bound closely round his head, and his face, I soon saw, was distorted by passion or excitement. The other horsemen separated to the right and left as they came up, and he spurred on through the passage thus opened. He rode, as I imagined, straight at me, brandishing a spear, and I felt that if I remained quiet I had a fair chance of being run through. With a quick motion, therefore, I cast aside my Arab cloak. I scarcely know whether it was my intention to defend my life or jump off my camel; but, fortunately, neither of these acts was called for. The sight of my Frank costume seemed to act as a charm, for the sheikh turned aside. I found, when the immediate danger was over, that my right hand grasped the only serviceable weapon among us.

Poor 'Amer now felt the full force of the charge, but he stood calmly in the midst of the excited group. The sheikh approached him at speed. The spear was raised, and shook from end to point with that peculiar quiver which those who have witnessed an Arab charge know full well. I held my breath, and felt as if paralysed. "They will murder him," I cried. "Let us try and save or help him, then," said my companion. But what could we do, without arms, and among so many? It would have been folly to have brought their wrath upon us by any show of resistance. As the sheikh was about to strike, a loud *la! la!* (no! no!) resounded from the whole party, and 'Amer, watching his opportunity, turned the point aside, and dragged his adversary from his horse. Now commenced a terrible struggle.

None of those around, for a time, took any part. The sheikh had far the advantage in strength and youthful vigour, but 'Amer was more than his equal in skill. They fortunately had no deadly weapons in their hands, but they used their hooked sticks with considerable effect. After a few minutes' fighting, the others interfered, and drew away the sheikh, still raging like a lion.

The mêlée was over, and we were marched off prisoners. Several Arabs came up to us, and by signs and words showed us we had nothing to fear, that *they* were our slaves, and that they would guard us with their lives. We now thought indeed that, for the present at least, there was little danger of any attack being made upon our persons, whatever might become of the little property we had with us. We assumed an air of perfect indifference, and did not utter a word except when directly questioned.

My poor animal, which exhibited such valour in the beginning of the battle, now seemed determined not to be led captive. Every attempt made to urge it onward only caused it to squat on the ground. It would go everywhere except in the way our captors wished to take it. The sheikh himself, seeing the difficulty, came up and seized the halter, but it was of no use. 'Amer at last led his dromedary in front, and then, seeing its leader, it followed without trouble. This procedure, however, was the cause of another scene that might have ended fatally, for the sheikh's wrath again rose, and, making a sudden bound, he snatched a spear from the hand of one of his followers, and rushed upon his foe. Quick as thought, however, an Arab dashed his horse between him and his intended victim, and wrested the spear from his grasp. He was thus baffled, but not stopped in his career, and poor 'Amer soon felt the weight of a stick wielded by a vigorous arm. Again and again were these attacks repeated, until at last 'Amer was led away under an escort.

After half an hour's march we found ourselves in the midst of vast flocks, laden camels, and harims perched on the backs of dromedaries. The sheikh struck his spear into

the ground, and we all squatted round it: our carpets were brought, and our saddle-bags placed at our sides to serve as cushions. Ere long a number of camels, laden with the sheikh's tent, furniture, and *harim*, came up, and the women and domestics soon completed the construction and furnishing of their desert home. The women's department in the tent was separated from the men's by a rude screen hung over a heap of sacks, containing rice, wheat, dates, and other necessities; within it were ranged the capacious cauldrons and dishes for the preparation and serving-up of the desert banquets.

A fire was kindled beside us, and coffee prepared. From a neat case porcelain cups were brought forth, and the sheikh himself presented to us the beverage, which we gladly received as an emblem and pledge of peace. After this necessary preliminary, a council of war commenced. Mohammed the Ageily was first taken aside and examined. On his return he told us that our host was the great and powerful Mohammed, chief of the tribe El-Misrâb; that all Tadmor and the desert around was his property; and, further, that 'Amer was a dog for attempting to intrude on his domains, or to conduct Frank *emîrs* to that city. Our reply was simple; we wished to trespass on no man's territory, and had only come because our sheikh had engaged to take us to Tadmor. If he could not do so, we must return, and he would consequently lose his reward.

We were asked from whence we came, and when we replied from Damascus, doubts seemed to be entertained on the subject. Several questions were put to us in reference to the people and the localities in the city—apparently as mere matters of course, but in reality to test the accuracy of our statements. We were asked about the terms of our agreement with 'Amer, and many other particulars. It was evident the sheikh was labouring under some mistake, but what it was we did not yet know.

After a lengthened examination and consultation the sheikh declared that 'Amer would not be permitted to take us to Tadmor, but that he would conduct us and send us

back to Kuryetein. We inquired on what terms; whereupon a sum was named far exceeding what we would give, and we peremptorily refused to agree to them. "What, then, will you do?" demanded one of those present. "Return to Damascus," was our calm reply. A grim smile passed over the faces of the assembled elders; and, though we sat with features as unmoved as any Turk, we could not but feel that it was much easier saying so than doing it. The sheikh turned eastward, and, pointing to the ruins that crowned the mountains and sides of the valley, said, "There is Tadmor, and, *wullah*, it is beautiful!"

There, in truth, were the tombs of the City of the Desert, clustered on peak and mountain-side; and there was the old castle, grim as a crusader baron, towering over them all. We felt the force of the chief's remark. The toil, discomfort, and danger of the desert had been cheerfully encountered to gain a view of these ruins, and now, when almost at their side, to be forced to return without gratifying our curiosity was hard to bear. But we had formed our resolution, and were determined to abide by it.

"Your words are true, Sheikh!" was our reply; "but here we have not a tenth of the sum you demand."

"You can send to Damascus for money, and a few days will bring it."

"Who will supply the messenger?" we inquired.

"I will," he answered.

We met this proposition, like the others, with a decided negative, and told the sheikh that it would not be well either for his credit or for the comfort of our friends to send word to Damascus that we were prisoners in the tents of the Misrab, and wanted our ransom; and we added, "Your revenue from travellers would then cease for ever."

"You are not prisoners," they all cried; "you are free to go where and when you like, only not to Tadmor."

The tent was now ready, and our effects were laid in the place of honour, beside the pile of stores. We at once accepted the invitation to enter, for the burning sun above

and the heated soil below had already almost scorched us ; the hardy sons of the desert, however, remained in their places round the spear of their chief. We had been alone for about an hour, when the man who had escorted 'Amer from the presence of the sheikh entered. We asked for our leader, but he only replied to our query by clasping both hands round each ankle in succession. Some minutes after another came in, who went through a little pantomime, intended to convey to us the intelligence that he had just cut off 'Amer's head. He grasped his sword, drew the blade quickly across his throat, and then clapped his hands to show that the work was finished. The Arabs are frequently in the habit of communicating intelligence even to each other in this way : signs they consider more impressive than words.

We knew not what to make of this. If true, our own position was undoubtedly very critical ; if merely intended to frighten us into submission, it was a warning to be firm. The Ageily entered while we were discussing these unexpected and startling tidings. Never did I see a man so much changed in so short a time. His face was not only pale, but ghastly, and his lips were dry and parched, as if with thirst and suffering. He came to where we sat, and seated himself on our carpets : this 'Amer, his master, had never presumed to do, though often invited ; and, simple though the act seemed, it showed us more than any other how much our circumstances were changed.

The afternoon was far advanced when the sheikh and his party entered. We invited him to a seat beside us ; but he politely refused, and took the lowest place. Coffee was again prepared, and presented, as before, by Mohammed himself. While drinking it, his youngest brother rode up on a splendid chesnut mare. A beautiful white falcon perched upon his wrist, and a dead hare lay across the front of the saddle. Hunting with the falcon is a favourite amusement of the Bedawîn. The birds are trained to act in concert with a dog in pursuit of the gazelle, and dart at the animal's head when in full flight, thus retarding its

"Where did you rest last night?" one of the Arabs again demanded.

"With the tribe beyond the hills."

"If the *Khouwajât* should be plundered or killed, would not that tribe, or 'Amer himself, be considered responsible?"

"No," replied our wily attendant, "for a hundred saw us this morning as we left, and numbers met us on the way."

I knew not why such questions were put, and I could not think even the fiercest among this tribe would venture on personal violence; and yet why should such hints be thrown out? They could not but perceive that the poor Ageily had little influence with us. He, however, evidently tried to make the best use he could of his power of speech, and showed about as much cunning and as little veracity as is usual with Arabs. On being afterwards asked how much money we had with us, he told the truth for once. The sum was not large, but it seemed a treasure to the poor Arab, who never sees money except when Providence sends a caravan in his way. He said emphatically we should never leave the camp with this sum on our persons, and I felt pretty confident he spoke the truth.

After this drama there was a comic scene enacted. When all had withdrawn except the few who lay in Indian style radiating with their feet to the fire, one of the number, doubtless annoyed by a species of close companions too common in this land, jumped to his feet, and raked the smouldering embers till they emitted a tall flame. The wind blew strongly, and the blaze danced and flickered in the blast. Choosing the windward side, he drew close to the fire, and commenced the process of shaking his tormentors into it. While thus engaged, a gust of wind swept round the other side of the tent, and in a second he was enveloped in the leaping flame. Uttering a cry of pain, he bounded backwards and disappeared in the darkness.

April 6th.—As the morning dawned, the bustle *in* the tent and the call of the shepherds *without* roused us from sleep. It was Sunday morning; but there is no Sabbath-rest in the desert. I wandered across the plain to some distance,

and there remained for a time undisturbed. On returning, the Ageily drew us aside and advised us to yield to the demand of the sheikh; but we felt little inclined to listen to his advice, as we knew well he wished to secure his own safety at our expense. We answered him somewhat sternly that we would abide by our resolution, and that we were prepared to bear the consequences.

"But," added he, "if you are even permitted to leave the camp, they will send a few horsemen, and rob you when beyond their territory."

"They may as well rob us on the road as in the tent."

"Then you will not see Tadmor."

"We care not," we replied, and entering the tent we saluted the chief and elders, who rose to receive us. A cloud passed over the face of Mohammed as our attendant related to him the result of the interview. Coffee was prepared, however, and dates with butter were served for breakfast. We were then informed that we must return to Damascus, and that the sheikh would furnish an escort as far as Kuryetein, but from thence we would be obliged to find our own way. We received the intelligence with perfect composure, and expressed our acquiescence by a simple nod.

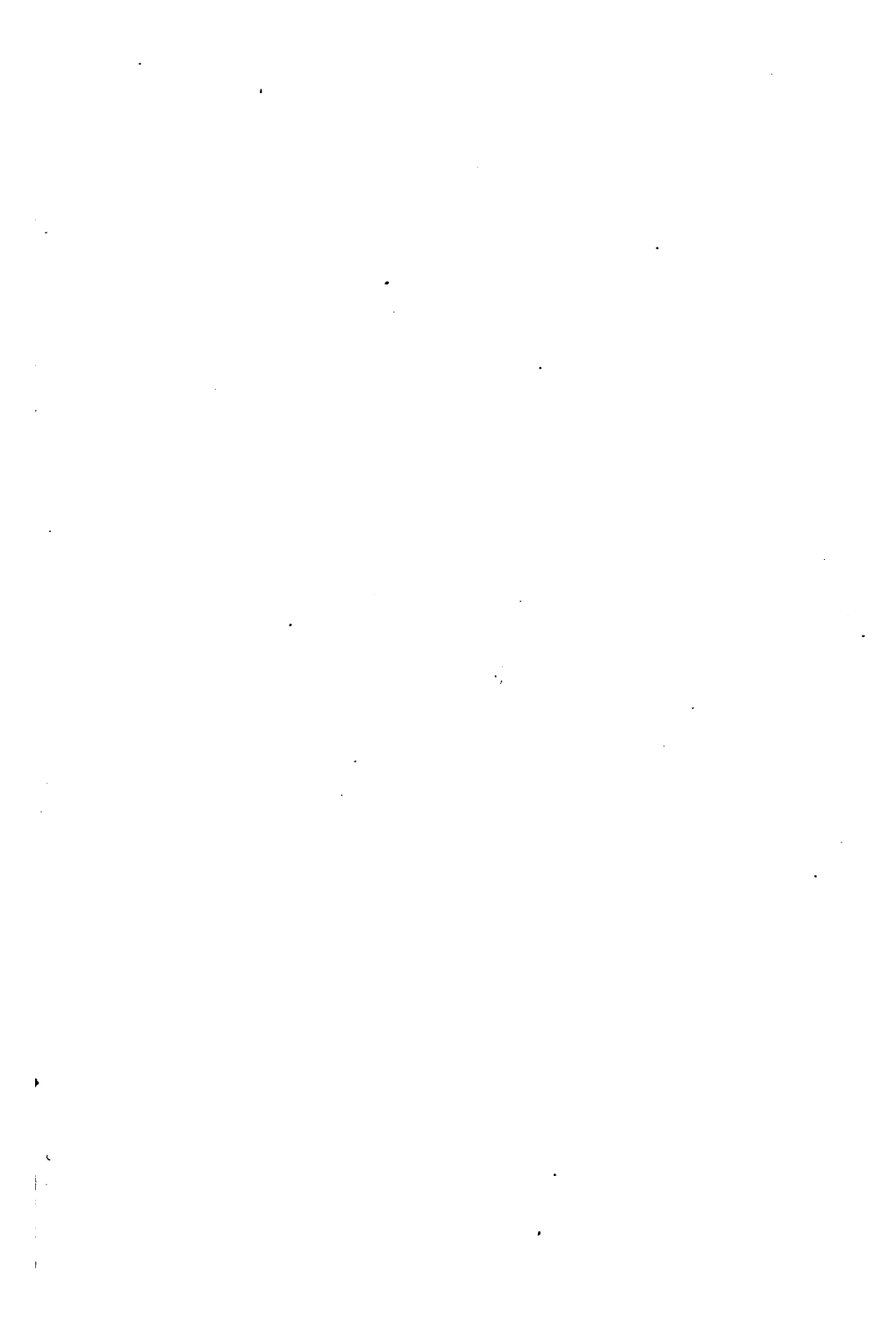
As we were talking over the new aspect of affairs, and the probability of being stripped on the way to Kuryetein, or more probably after leaving that village, 'Amer walked in and quietly took his seat in the circle, without saluting any one save the sheikh's brother, who rose and embraced him. Had a spirit from the "vasty deep" made its appearance we could scarcely have been more surprised: we were now confident that, go where we might, there was no danger of personal violence. An explanation ensued which accounted for the late attack and the rage of the sheikh. Some consul at Beyrout, it appeared, had sent a messenger to inform the tribe that two travellers wished to visit Palmyra, and would require an escort to await them at Kuryetein. Miguel, the chief's second brother, had gone there with horses and guards; and when we appeared, the universal opinion was that we were the two travellers referred to, and that 'Amer

had thus attempted to deprive Mohammed of his rightful reward.

Still Mohammed insisted we must return to Damascus if we did not agree to his terms ; we refused, and our dromedaries were brought to the door. Our cloaks, coats, and saddle-bags were soon arranged, and we mounted. Just as I was moving off, the sheikh came to me and whispered, "Yonder is Tadmor ; give me that pistol and I will take you there myself." I refused, and followed 'Amer. We were soon sweeping away westward among the black tents, and flocks, and groups of beautiful Arab horses, our backs to the tempting ruins. I turned to take a last look at them, and 'Amer, seeing regret and disappointment in my face, came up and said, "Don't give the pistol ; don't give anything. I will myself bring you back some other time." This was little comfort, for we felt that, if once safe within the city walls, we would not soon again commit ourselves to the tender mercies of Bedawin.

A shout was heard behind us, and a messenger came up at speed to say that the sheikh wanted to speak with us. We expected only a repetition of his demand, and made up our minds for a final refusal. We turned our dromedaries and awaited his approach. "Dismount," said he, as he came up, in the abrupt manner of an Arab chief ; "we must part friends, and you must say that every Englishman is as safe in the desert of Tadmor as within the walls of Damascus. Put down the three hundred piastres." We were on the ground in a moment, and, squatting in a little circle, Mr. Robson drew out his purse and emptied it into the sheikh's cloak. He counted the money, and, finding about forty piastres over, handed them back ; putting the rest in his pocket, he jumped to his feet and said, "Now for Tadmor."

We were accompanied by about thirty of the tribe, headed by Mohammed himself on a splendid mare, and among the rest I observed my friend of the previous evening, the graceful *Mitbah*. He came up and said he was going to guide me all over the ruins. In two hours we passed through the splendid but dilapidated gateway that opens into the



court of the Temple of the Sun, and found ourselves among the wretched hovels that half conceal the ruins of that noble structure.

During Monday, the 7th, and the forenoon of Tuesday, we employed every moment in the examination of Palmyra. The whole site we divided into sections, and one after another we explored in detail. We lost no time, and got a satisfactory, if a hasty, view of the desert city. I shall endeavour to give such a sketch of the ruins, and such a description of the most beautiful and important among them, as will enable my readers to form some idea of the remains of the city of Zenobia. The accompanying plan is chiefly taken from the great work of Wood and Dawkins.

Palmyra is situated at the foot of a range of white hills. Opposite the city is a wide opening leading into the valley which runs westward to Kuryetein. Eastward and southward is a desert plain reaching to the horizon. The traveller from the west generally approaches the ruins through the break in the mountains, and the first object that attracts his attention is the Saracenic castle on an isolated peak to the left. On each side of the road he observes tower-like tombs—some nearly perfect, others confused heaps of ruins. After passing these he surmounts an easy swell, and the panorama of the ruins opens before him. He is struck with astonishment at their extent and utter desolation. They are white as snow-wreaths, and not a tree, or shrub, or blade of grass, or solitary weed, is seen among them! Heaps of stones, noble porticoes, and long and beautiful colonnades, are intermixed with the shattered ruins of temples, triumphal arches, and monuments erected in honour of the mighty dead. There is no sign of life—all is bare and desolate.

The most remarkable ruin is the Temple of the Sun. The lofty wall which enclosed the court is in places nearly perfect, and forms a defence to the modern village. To the right of this, beyond the ruins, are gardens cultivated by the villagers, and in these a number of palm-trees grow, as if to prove that, though fallen, this is *Palmyra* still.

It was, no doubt, the existence of a large fountain—that first requisite in a thirsty land—which, at a very early period, attracted man to this dreary spot, and led to the founding of a city. At the foot of the mountain-range to the south-west is the principal source. From a cave-like aperture issues a stream of considerable size. It is impregnated with sulphur, and slightly warm; but after running a few hundred yards the sulphureous taste is scarcely perceptible.

There are two aqueducts which formerly brought water to the city from distant sources. One is now ruinous, but can be traced through the opening in the mountain-chain into the valley on the west, across which it comes, in a south-easterly direction. This aqueduct is a splendid work; it is eight feet in height by four in breadth, and constructed of finely-hewn stones, as shown in the cut.



The source of the second aqueduct is not known, nor was I able to see any traces of its course beyond the circuit of the walls. It conveys

a copious supply of water slightly impregnated with sulphur. The stream from it is first seen among the ruins on the north side of the great temple, and flows into gardens. Near the centre of the city I was conducted by our guide to a small reservoir about ten feet below the surface, in which I found excellent sweet water; but I could not ascertain from whence it came.

Before we left Damascus 'Amer had told us that a camel, in passing along the plain near the city, had sunk into the earth and disappeared. Its owner, who was a little in advance, on turning round could see nothing of his animal, and thought some evil spirit had wafted it away. Turning back, he found it standing on a heap of rubbish in a sepulchral cave. To this spot we requested our friend

Mitbah to conduct us. It is a short distance south of the fountain, and in the midst of an extensive necropolis. There are several tower-tombs around it, and large numbers of elevations in the surface of the plain, each of which, no doubt, marks the position of a sepulchre, similar to that into which the camel had fallen. Near the spot we observed on the ground folding-doors of white limestone, and a fragment of a statue, much defaced, but well executed. The tomb itself was in the form of a Greek cross, hewn in the soft rock, and arched overhead. There were three tiers of *loculi* for bodies in each compartment, but I saw no inscription. Several statues and other ornaments had, we were told, been taken out of it when first discovered; but we could not learn what had been done with them. Those sepulchres that remain unopened might afford a rich harvest to the antiquary, and possibly bring to light some interesting historic memorial.

We crossed the valley, and, ascending the bank on the northern side, found ourselves in a wilderness of ruins. It was not without difficulty we made our way over the heaps of stones and fallen columns. It is not here as in other places of Syria, and in other lands, where the débris of ancient buildings has been employed in the erection of modern edifices—where temples have been changed into churches, and churches again remodelled for the service of Islam; in this city each stone, and column, and fragment of cornice, lies where it fell; and the finger of time has in general dealt so gently, that each structure might be reared up again of its old materials.

We made our way to the north-western angle of the walls, which terminate some distance up the side of the hill, and here, on the gentle slope, commanding the panorama of the desert, stood a peripteral temple. The door was surrounded by a broad border of vine-branches and bunches of grapes. Below it is a smaller temple, with several fragments of fluted columns *in situ*; and a little distance to the south-east is a magnificent mausoleum, the portico of which is nearly perfect. It consists of six

columns, each a monolith, and finely proportioned. The building is nearly square, and the interior has on three sides recesses for bodies. Between the recesses are semi-columns, supporting a rich cornice of garlands. Just in front of the portico the great colonnade terminated. A few yards distant is a small temple or mausoleum, with a portico, only two columns of which now stand. In the interior is a sarcophagus, profusely ornamented with bas-reliefs of satyrs and garlands.

Around this section the city walls are still, in part, standing ; and the gates are distinguishable, though choked up with rubbish.

Crossing the wall, we passed through another cemetery, with a few tower-tombs, now in ruins, lying all solitary in the plain. There are here scores of subterranean sepulchres, whose positions are marked by the swell of the vaulted roofs ; and most of them, perhaps, have never been opened. Leaving these, we ascended the steep hill-side to the old castle, situated on the summit. It is surrounded by a deep moat, hewn in the rock. A narrow bridge once led to the great gateway, but it is fallen, and we found some difficulty in scaling the scarp of the rock. We succeeded in obtaining admission to the interior through a breach in the wall. Here are long corridors, vaulted halls, and deep reservoirs, with innumerable small chambers and cells. The castle is in a good state of preservation, and might be defended by a few resolute men against a host of Arabs. The situation is so commanding, the access so difficult, and the moat so deep, that no Bedawin would attempt its capture if a few field-pieces were mounted and manned by a determined garrison. It might be made a station of vast importance for controlling the Arab tribes. The building is evidently of comparatively recent date. I could not observe any inscriptions : and had it been a work of the early Saracens, they would doubtless have left upon it some record.

The castle stands on the summit of one of the highest peaks in the range, and commands a view which, for extent,

barrenness, and utter desolation, is almost unparalleled. On the one side is the desert stretching to the horizon, level as the ocean, and without tree or shrub. On the other are bleak mountain-chains shutting in the long plain which opens like a vista to the westward, revealing the pale blue summits of far-distant Lebanon ; while at your feet lie the ruins of the desert city, like the bleached bones of an army of giants.

We descended into the valley to examine the mausoleums



Interior of Tomb.

which are among the most remarkable monuments of Palmyra. One especially attracted our attention, being both externally and internally in good preservation. A description of it may not be without interest, and will convey to the reader an idea of the general plan and decorations of them all. A handsome doorway with a pediment admits to a chamber 27 feet long by 10 wide, and about 20 high. Along each side are four fluted Corinthian pilasters, with tiers of loculi between them for the reception

of the dead. Opposite the door is a shallow apse, with a semi-column on each side supporting a plain cornice. Within the apse are busts in rilievo with Palmyrene inscriptions. Above it is another apse, similar in character, but smaller, and having a projecting slab like the side of a sarcophagus, upon which are four busts with inscriptions. On the left of the entrance is a staircase, and over it are five busts, two in one row and three in another. On each side of the door is a pilaster, and over it a large bust. The ceiling is of slabs of stone panelled and painted—the divisions being coloured brown and the panels blue, with a white star-like flower in the centre. The ornaments are well designed and tastefully executed, and the effect of the whole is rich. The colours are clear as when the painter completed his work, and the delicate acanthi of the capitals and leaves of the flowers have been but little affected by the lapse of ages; but the fanaticism of a barbarous race has mutilated the busts.

The building has five stories, all constructed on the same plan; but the others are neither so lofty nor so highly ornamented as that described. On a tablet over the door is an inscription in Palmyrene and Greek.

On our return to the village we passed the fragments of a column, which a few years ago was one of the chief ornaments of the city. A French antiquary, wishing to have a glance at the interior, made a hole in its side, and blew it up with gunpowder!

Our next walk was to the monumental column on the north side of the great temple, 28 on the plan. Our object here was to verify an inscription, on the reading of which a theory in Biblical criticism has been grounded. It was thought that the hero to whom the monument was erected is represented as the *son of two different individuals*—one his adopted, the other his real, father. This was first observed and the reasoning deducible from it applied by Harmer to reconcile the genealogies of our Lord in Matthew and Luke. The theory, however, is grounded on an error of the copyist.

We now walked to the splendid ruins of the great

colonnade. There were originally four rows of columns, forming a central and two side avenues, which extended through the city, a distance of about 4000 feet. Each pillar had, on its inner side, a bracket for a statue. One can well imagine what a noble vista would meet the eye of the Palmyrene, as he walked along this splendid arcade—the beams of an Eastern sun lighting up temples and palaces on each side, and breaking through the columns that lined the street; while the sculptured forms of the greatest and best of his countrymen were ranged above him, as if pointing the way to glory.

This colonnade contained more than *one thousand five hundred columns*, and of these above *one hundred and fifty* occupy their places. The height of the order is 57 feet. The proportions of the pillars are good, though the details are not executed with the same taste as those of the great temple. It is remarkable that in almost every city of importance in Syria we find traces of similar colonnades; in Antioch, Apamea, Damascus, Samaria, and Gerasa, their remains may still be seen.

But of all the ruins of Palmyra none can be compared with the Temple of the Sun. The court in which it stands is square, 740 feet on each side. The external wall has a projecting base, and over it a range of pilasters supporting a plain frieze and cornice—the height of the whole being 70 feet. A considerable part of it remains perfect. On the western side was a portico of ten columns surmounted by an entablature, now destroyed. A flight of stairs extending the whole length of the portico (138 feet) led up to the grand entrance. The door was 32 feet 6 inches high by 15 feet 9 inches wide, ornamented with wreaths of leaves and flowers. Each of the side architraves is a monolith. The side doors are half of the above dimensions similarly ornamented, and the remaining intervals between the columns were filled up with tabernacles and niches.

Beautiful as must have been the exterior, it was eclipsed by the scene that burst upon the beholder's eyes as he crossed the threshold. A double colonnade encircled the

interior, with the exception of the western side, where there was but one range; each pillar had a bracket for a statue. The back wall of the cloisters had niches with shell tops. Near the centre of the court stands the temple itself on a raised platform. In form it was unique. A single row of fluted Corinthian columns, 64 feet high, with bronze capitals, encompassed the shrine and supported an unbroken cornice, ornamented with festoons of fruit and flowers, held up by angels. A doorway is placed between two columns on the west side, and fronting this is the door of the cell, 33 feet high by 15 feet wide. The ornaments upon the latter resemble those on the door of the temple at Bâ'albek; the soffit has a sculptured eagle with expanded wings upon a starred ground. The interior has been much defaced, and the roof is gone. At each end is a small apse or chamber with a ceiling of a single stone, panelled and richly ornamented. That on the north side is remarkable as having the signs of the zodiac round the circumference of a circle.

Travellers have generally represented the buildings of Palmyra as constructed of marble; but the fact is, there is not a marble column or stone among the ruins. White limestone of a fine texture from the neighbouring mountains has been universally employed, and the only other stone is sienite, a few shafts of which may be seen near the long colonnade. One of these, a single block, measures 30 feet in length and 3 feet in diameter. How it was conveyed to this spot is a mystery. To transport it from the Upper Nile to the coast of Syria was a work of no ordinary difficulty, but to convey it thence over mountains and across deserts for nearly 200 miles shows an engineering skill almost equalling that of our own day.

I endeavoured to trace the extent of the city walls. Those now seen are of the period of Justinian. They are about three miles in circumference, but there is evidence to show that the ancient city extended far beyond them, and probably occupied a space nearly ten miles in circuit. The great temple was in Saracenic times converted into a fortification.

The population of Palmyra may have amounted to some seventy families when we were there, but it is continually fluctuating, and since that time I have heard that nearly one half of its people deserted it on account of a private quarrel. The miserable mud huts were clustered round the bases of columns, and fragments of sculptured cornices and capitals lay in the little courtyards. The women and children crowded round us to get a good look at the *Frangi*, and some few brought coins and antique gems for sale.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PALMYRA.

The earliest notice of Palmyra is in 1 Kings ix. 18, where it is stated that Solomon built "Tadmor in the wilderness." Solomon was a commercial monarch. A secure route for the caravans that imported the treasures of India, Persia, and Mesopotamia, was of importance. Tadmor is about half-way between the banks of the Euphrates and the borders of Syria. Copious fountains supply the first requisite for a desert station; and, influenced no doubt by such considerations, Solomon made choice of this spot for the erection of a commercial resting-place.

The city retained its freedom until A.D. 130, when it submitted to the Emperor Adrian, and came under the protection of Rome. His predecessor, Trajan, had subdued the Parthians, and captured Babylon and Ctesiphon, and the little republic was thus encompassed by the victorious legions of the "Eternal City." Adrian was a munificent patron of Palmyra, for he gave it his own name, raised it to the rank of a colony, and adorned it with many of those colonnades and temples which are so grand even in their ruin. It appears, however, that the citizens themselves were not greatly behind the Romans in refinement and love of art. That magnificent mausoleum described above was erected previous to the time of Adrian.

The date of the great colonnade cannot be determined, but it is probable that it and the buildings adjoining were the results of a magnificent plan for adorning the city by the Emperor Adrian. There is evidence from the inscrip-

tions upon it that it was constructed before A.D. 238, as this date is found underneath one of the brackets.

From this period the influence and wealth of Palmyra rapidly increased. Though nominally subject to Rome, it had a government of its own, and was ruled by its own laws. The public affairs were directed by a senate chosen by the suffrages of the people; and most of its public monuments were erected, as the inscriptions state, by the senate and people. As a colony it was highly favoured, having been elevated to the rank of capital. For nearly a century and a half did this prosperity continue; and it was at last checked by the pride it had generated.

Odenathus, having rendered important services to Rome, was associated in the sovereignty with Gallienus. His reign was short but brilliant, and he bequeathed the kingdom of the East to a worthy successor—Zenobia, his widow. The names of Zenobia and Palmyra will be associated while history remains. The virtue, the wisdom, and the heroic spirit of that extraordinary woman were not surpassed in the annals of antiquity. She was at first nominally regent during the minority of her son Vabalathus; but ambition urged her to lay claim to supreme authority, and adopt the high-sounding title of “Queen of the East.” In A.D. 270 Aurelian ascended the throne of the Cæsars, and, after subduing his enemies in the West, turned his arms against Zenobia. Her armies were defeated in a pitched battle near Antioch, and, having retreated to Emesa, they were again routed by the Emperor, and driven back upon their desert home. Aurelian pursued them across the parched plains, and invested Palmyra, which capitulated after a long resistance. Zenobia attempted to escape, but was captured on the banks of the Euphrates, and brought into the presence of the stern Emperor. She was taken to Rome, fettered with shackles of gold, and led by a golden chain along the *Via Sacra*, in front of the chariot of the triumphant Aurelian, while all Rome crowded to the spot to see the Arabian queen. She was worthy of a better fate. If common humanity did not prevent Roman citizens from

exulting over an honourable but fallen foe, the memory of her husband's victories, and services to the state, might have saved her from the indignity of appearing before a mob in chains.

Aurelian captured Palmyra in A.D. 272, and left in it a small garrison of Roman soldiers; soon after his departure the people rose and massacred them to a man. On receiving this intelligence the Emperor returned, took the city, pillaged it, and put the inhabitants to the sword. The city was soon afterwards repaired by the orders of the conqueror, and the Temple of the Sun restored; but it never recovered its former opulence, and it is now a ruin, occupied by a few families of poor oppressed Arabs.

Tuesday, April 8th.—Sheikh Mohammed with his train remained in Tadmor during our visit, and left this morning a short time before us, on receiving a promise that we would breakfast with him in his tent. Bidding adieu to Sheikh Fâres, who accompanied us to the gate, we mounted our dromedaries, and turned their heads westward. The ruins were soon passed, the Valley of Tombs left behind, and in two hours we dismounted at the tent-door of the Arab chief. Breakfast was served, consisting of dates spread upon a large copper tray, with a pyramid of snowy butter in the centre. With the help of our own bread, we made a hearty meal, and at noon resumed our journey.

'Amer proposed to take us to Damascus by the ordinary route, to which we readily agreed. Our road led up the plain, and nothing could be more dreary than the prospect: a flower, or a few tufts of grass, or a stunted weed, occasionally appeared upon the flinty soil, but the hills on each side were bare and white, and the plain so completely deserted, that we rode for seven hours without seeing a living creature. The sun went down, and the western horizon was tinted with that rich golden hue which is only seen in the East. We had begun to fear a night march, or a bivouac under the canopy of heaven, exposed to the

CHAPTER V.

THE VALLEY AND FOUNTAIN OF THE BARADA—THE
ANCIENT ABANA.

The Barada—The Salahiyyeh hills—Dummar—Fine valley—Ancient aqueduct—Great fountain of Fijeh—Shk, the ancient ABILA—Roman road and aqueducts—Inscriptions—History of Abila—Sublime pass—Roman bridges—Plain of Zabdâny—Fountain of the Barada—Physical geography of district—The “Rivers of Damascus” identified.

I HAVE stated that the beauty and richness of the plain of Damascus, and the existence of the city itself, depend on the waters of the Barada. The reader may therefore wish to accompany me as I ascend the wild ravine through which this river flows. Along this route I have often ridden, alone and in the company of friends, by day amid unclouded splendour, and by night when the pale moon threw her silvery rays on crag and peak, yet I have never wearied of it. I cannot promise my reader that he will not weary of my attempt to describe scenes familiar to me as the home of my youth; but I could assure him that, if I had him here on some balmy morning in spring, mounted on a spirited Arab, his attention would not flag till we had reached the end of our journey.

Half an hour from the city we cross the canal Taura, and, passing through Salahiyyeh, emerge from the gardens and orchards of Damascus. The road skirts the mountain-side, which rises on the right, bleak, white, and precipitous, while close on the left it is washed by a sea of verdure. Ascending diagonally we reach the spot beside a wely, from which is obtained the celebrated view of Damascus and its plain; but another view lies before us no less remarkable, if less

famed—a view which for naked desolation has scarcely an equal. The bare hills, white as snow, shoot up their conical summits, smooth as if scarped by the hand of man; beyond them is the Sahra, like a sea of molten iron; and farther still in the distance rises the central ridge of Antilebanon, furrowed by torrents and rent by ravines.

Descending, we reach in half an hour the village of Dummar, pleasantly situated on the banks of the Barada. The ordinary road to Bâ'albek here crosses the river. We shall take another and more interesting route past the fountain of Fijeh.

Leaving Dummar, we skirt the white hills, and follow a narrow path along the side of the valley. The scenery below us is beautiful. The vale is of considerable breadth; meadows and orchards of walnut and apricot trees spread out on each side, while a fringe of poplars mark the course of the stream; and the whole is shut in by conical hills, whose whiteness sets off the deep green of the foliage. Soon, however, we leave this little paradise, and emerge upon the plain of Sahra. A dreary ride of three miles brings us to the head of a valley, down which our road winds among groves of fig-trees and terraced vineyards. On the right is the precipitous mountain rising over us some 3000 feet; on the left is a long slope surmounted by a wall of naked rock; while in front is the deep ravine through which the Barada rushes. Descending this valley, we reach the little village of Bessîma, built on the very brink of the Barada, and surrounded by the wildest and most romantic scenery. After sweeping through the strip of gardens above the village, the river enters a gorge so narrow that no space is left even for a goat-path along the bank. Here, tunneled through the side of the perpendicular cliff, is an ancient aqueduct which once brought water from the fountain of Fijeh, and its dry bed now forms the only means of communication between Bessîma and Ashrafiyeh, twenty minutes farther down.

For two miles above Bessîma the Barada forces its way between rocky banks. The winding of the glen affords

variety of scene, and successive pictures of wild grandeur, as we ride along the shelving path. No description could convey a just impression of this sublime pass. The industry of man has added much to the grandeur of nature. Wherever a tree can take root, or a terrace can be constructed for the vine, the space is occupied; the foliage of the walnut in many places shades the rocky path, while its branches touch the vine that clings to the precipice beyond it.

Passing through this valley we reach, a mile and a half above Bessima, the village of Fijeh, and a few yards beyond it the great fountain. It is seventy yards from the bed of the Barada, on the left bank, and bursts from a cave underneath an old temple at the foot of a cliff. The mouth of the cave was formerly confined by masonry to an opening about a yard square; but it is now broken. From it, and fissures in the rock on each side, the water gushes out with a noise like thunder, and forms, a few yards below, a torrent 30 feet wide and 3 feet deep, with a current so rapid, that none would venture to ford it. Beside the fountain are the massive ruins of another small temple.

Fijeh is one of the *two* great sources of the Barada, and contributes about *two-thirds* of the water that spreads verdure and beauty round Damascus. Many have thought that this is one of the *rivers* of which Naaman spoke; but Fijeh is a *fountain*, not a *river*. It is correctly described by the geographer and historian Abulfeda. Of late it has been frequently visited, and more frequently described, by travellers, but in none of their works have I seen an account so clear, definite, and simple as that of the Arab historian.

Leaving the fountain, we follow a difficult path cut in the side of the mountain. The valley expands, and the belt of gardens and orchards along the banks becomes broader: while the hills, being less precipitous, are cultivated in terraces. In half an hour we reach Deir Mukurrin, and in twenty minutes more Kefr ez-Zeit. The wady now runs in a zigzag course to Sûk, its sides sloping more gently, and affording a light soil for cultivation.

The situation of Sûk is picturesque, and the scenery around it grand. It stands upon level ground on the right bank of the Barada, embowered in foliage. Beside it rises the mountain, Neby Habîl, whose sides are precipices of rock. A short distance above the village the wady makes a sharp turn to the west, shutting in the view. In the recess formed by the bend of the river in the mountain-side may be seen the dark entrances to numerous sepulchral caves—some high up in the face of the cliff, and reached by flights of steps; others lower down, and easy of access.

It has been well known for more than thirty years that this is the site of the *Abila of Lysanias*, the capital of the tetrarchy of *Abilene*. The old itineraries fix the position of that city with sufficient accuracy. It was on the great road between Heliopolis and Damascus, thirty-two miles from the former, and eighteen from the latter.

The ancient name *Abila* still clings to the spot. On the summit of Neby Habîl is a tomb called *Kabr Habîl—The Tomb of ABEL*. Beside it is a small building in ruins, whose massive foundations and moulded cornices show that it must be ascribed to the Roman age. It was 14 yards long by 17 yards wide; in front, towards the east, was a portico, the columns of which have fallen and rolled down the mountain-side. The position of the ruin, and the fact that the door is towards the east, are sufficient to prove that it was originally a temple.

From *Kabr Habîl* I descended the hill on the north side to the bridge which now spans the stream. Crossing to the left bank, I climbed up among huge masses of rock, and reached the Roman road here hewn through the cliff. Its breadth is 12 feet, and the total length of the cutting 450 feet. The wall of rock on the left is from 20 to 30 feet high. The road terminates at the edge of a precipice, and was formerly carried along on arches. On the north wall of the excavation are two Latin inscriptions, each occurring in two different places. The larger and more important inscription states that the "Emperor Cæsar M. Aur. Antoninus Aug. Armeniacus, and the Emperor Cæsar L. Aurel.

Verus Aug. Armeniacus, restored the road broken away by the force of the river; the mountain being cut through by the agency of Julius Verus, legate of the province of Syria, at the expense of the inhabitants of *Abilene*." The date of this inscription must be about A.D. 164.

On the top of a tell, farther down, are the ruins of a village, comparatively modern, but constructed of the materials of more ancient buildings. The ruins of Abila extend more than a mile along the left bank; and some distance below them, near the village of Kefr, are the remains of a temple.

We forded the stream below Sûk, and proceeded to examine the right bank and the village itself for remains of antiquity. Here, also, are broken columns, some of them of massive proportions, and fragments of sculptured cornices.

About sixty years before the Christian era, Ptolemy was King of Chalcis, and his kingdom embraced the southern ridge of Antilebanon. Upon his death, Lysanias, his son, succeeded to the throne, and removed the seat of government to Abila, which, to distinguish it from other cities of the same name, was called "Abila of Lysanias;" and the *whole kingdom* over which he ruled was called, in accordance with the common practice of the period, "The house of Lysanias." Lysanias was murdered through the artifices of Cleopatra. After her death Abilene fell into the hands of Zenodorus, and then of the Lysanias who is mentioned by St. Luke.

In A.D. 634 Abila was captured and plundered by the Saracens. The circumstances under which this capture was made are worthy of record, as tending to explain the origin of its modern name. There lived at that time, in a convent, a priest celebrated for sanctity and learning. An annual *fair*, having something of the character of a pilgrimage, was held at his residence at Easter. The followers of Mohammed had completed the plunder of Damascus, and were looking round the neighbouring cities for a good opportunity of extending the faith and obtaining additional booty, when they were informed of this fair. Not a moment was

lost: the Christian merchants were surprised by the Muslem soldiers, and stripped of everything. Since that period the name of the place has been *Sūk Wady Barada*, "The Fair of Wady Barada."

Above the ruins the valley becomes narrower, and the scenery wilder. Naked precipices rise on each side, and confine the foaming torrent. The road, after crossing the bridge, follows the left bank, where a way has been cut for it—in some places along the shelving bank, in others through the soft rock. In half an hour we pass the central ridge of Antilebanon, and emerge on the plain of Zebdāny. On the left, as we leave the defile, is a waterfall, and a few yards above it are the remains of two Roman bridges, one of which spanned the Barada, and the other conveyed an aqueduct across the bed of a winter stream from Wady el-Kurn.

The plain of Zebdāny is not more than half a mile wide at its southern extremity. Down it the Barada flows in an easy current. Four miles above the pass its channel sweeps round to the west, where the plain opens to a breadth of nearly three miles. Following the course of the river, we reach the banks of a lake, some 300 yards long by 50 wide. This is the source of the Abana.

The mountain-range on the *east* of the plain is the main ridge of Antilebanon, and has an average elevation of about 6000 feet; one of its peaks, eight miles north-east of the fountain of the Barada, attains an altitude of 7000 feet, and is, with the exception of Hermon, the loftiest in the range. The opposite range on the west of the plain, which travellers and cartographers have hitherto represented as the central chain, is considerably lower.

I have elsewhere endeavoured to identify the "Rivers of Damascus," which the proud Syrian preferred to all the waters of Israel; but it may not be out of place here to state a few of the arguments which appear to favour the conclusion that the modern Barada is the *Abana* of Scripture. There are at present only two rivers of any note in this region, the Barada and the 'Awaj. They are both within

the boundaries of the territory of Damascus, and it is to be remembered that Naaman speaks of *rivers* and not *fountains*. This fact, I believe, is fatal to the supposition that the *fountain* of Fijeh is one of the *rivers* of Damascus.

The only point of difficulty is to decide which is the Abana and which the Pharpar. It would seem natural that the more important stream, that with which a citizen of Damascus would be most familiar, should be first mentioned. A Damascene of the present day would never put the 'Awaj before the Barada in speaking to a stranger. The latter is much the larger river: some branch of it meets him in every quarter of the city, and the murmur of fountains supplied by it falls upon his ear in every dwelling. It alone flows through the city, the other river being several miles distant. These arguments do not amount to proof, but they render it highly probable that the stream which we have followed to its source is the first of those rivers mentioned by Naaman in comparison with the waters of Israel.

CHAPTER VI.

MOUNT HERMON, AND THE SOURCES OF THE
PHARPAR AND JORDAN.

Bludân — Ancient "High Place" — Antilebanon — Banditti — Fearful tale — Rasheiya and its prince — Ascent of Hermon — Interesting ruins on summit — The sources of the Pharpar — Descent to Hasbeiya — Source of Nahr Hasbâny — Tell el-Kâdy, Dan, and the fountains of the Jordan — Bânîds, Cæsarea Philippi — Castle of Bânîds — Lake Phiala, and Roman Road — Arab robbers — Beit Jenn and the second source of the Pharpar — Description of the Pharpar — Approach to Damascus from the west.

THE village of *Bludân*, from which I propose to set out on my next excursion, has been my summer residence for four years. Many of the pages I now present to the public have been penned in the shade of its delicious gardens, while enjoying relaxation from more important labours.

Bludân is situated on the mountain-side, 1000 feet above the plain of *Zebdâny*, on the declivity of the loftiest peak of *Antilebanon*. Around and above it fountains gush forth, whose waters, distributed over the slopes, render the soil wonderfully productive. Orchards of walnut, apricot, almond, and apple trees please the eye, and enrich the industrious inhabitants with their fruit. Poplars line the rivulets, and vineyards cover the hill-sides and cluster in the glens. The view from the village is wide and beautiful, embracing the southern section of *Antilebanon* with the range of *Lebanon* from *Sunnân* and *Kenîseh* to the lofty peak at the cedars.

On the morning of the 30th of August, 1852, I left *Bludân*, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Frazier, and Mr. Peck, an American traveller, whose lively sketches of the East have appeared in the columns of the 'New York Observer,' and

have been since read with pleasure and interest on the spot where they were written. We descended the mountain-side by a steep and difficult path, now winding round the bosom of a deep glen, now skirting some projecting cliff,—at one time encompassed by masses of foliage, at another clambering over scarped rock. Five minutes below Bludân are the ruins of a convent, with columns and arches still standing; and fifteen minutes farther the path winds among the shattered remains of a small village, whose antiquity is proved by the sepulchres and sarcophagi in the rocks around. On the left, above the ruins, amid a grove of ancient oaks, is a rude altar, where the villagers *break earthen jars* in honour of some saint or demon, whom they call “The Mother of Fragments!” Around the altar are foundations of large stones, apparently of remote antiquity. May not this be one of those “high places” where the ancient Syrians assembled to pay homage to their gods? And may not the singular and destructive rites by which the people now seek to propitiate the tutelary saint or deity be some lingering remnant of the worship of their ancestors?

We reached the plain in half an hour, and a pleasant ride of an hour and twenty minutes more brought us to the banks of the lake from which the Abana flows. From hence we travelled along the base of a rugged line of hills, and in an hour reached Batrûny. Continuing in the same direction till within a short distance of the eastern entrance of Wady el-Kurn, we turned to the right, and, clambering up the mountain-side, gained the summit in another hour. Here we had a commanding view of alpine scenery, with the plain of Damascus in the distance.

Descending towards the west by a path running parallel to the wild glen, we reached the plain of Judeideh, and crossing the Beyrout road turned south-west up a rugged valley, along whose sides are thickets of dwarf oak. Ascending gradually for an hour and a half, we emerged on a plateau, wild and rugged. On our left ran a range of hills resembling a Cyclopean wall. In front, perched upon its jagged summit, stood the village of Yüntah.

Having crossed the plateau and ascended the slope, we reached this strangely-situated village. It was not without some apprehension we approached it. Its inhabitants, Druzes, we knew to be bloodthirsty, and its sheikhs bandit chiefs. Only two weeks previous to our visit six of these sheikhs, with a few of their retainers, went in the night to Sûk-Wady-Barada, entered a house, tore an unoffending young man from the arms of his wife, almost hacked him to pieces in her presence, and then coolly rode away with large booty in money and jewels. Mr. Wood, the British consul, was in an adjoining room when the deed was committed. Hearing the wailing of women, he ran out and found the young man dead. The murderers afterwards, with characteristic Arab politeness, apologised to the consul for having committed the crime while he was in the village ! The Government, on the demand of Mr. Wood, sent fifty horsemen to apprehend the murderers, but they assembled their retainers in their rocky fastness and drove the troops back. In attempts afterwards made the Pasha was not more successful, and for months Sheikh Daûd of Yüntah became the dread and pest of this whole region. At length, however, through the exertions of our consul, Sheikh Daûd was seized by the Druze chief S'aïd Jimblât, and sent in chains to Beyrout. It was then found that the wife of the murdered man had been the chief instigator of the crime, and had subsequently, in male attire, followed the fortunes of the murderer of her husband !

As Sheikh Daûd was still at large when we visited Yüntah, we knew not what kind of reception we might meet with ; yet we did not choose to go out of our way to avoid him. Our apprehensions were not lessened by a nearer view of the village, and of such of its people as we met. It occupies a strong position on the summit of a rocky ridge, and might be defended by a few resolute men against a large force. The inhabitants were, like their country, wild and savage-looking, and were all armed with guns and knives. We observed a number, as we ascended the slopes, peering at us from behind precipices and from the house-tops above.

None, however, either saluted or interfered with us ; and we rode on, well pleased to escape both insult and attention.

Three miles and a half from Yüntah we reached the brow of a declivity, where a scene of beauty opened up to our view for which we were altogether unprepared. At our feet lay a fertile plain, regular as an amphitheatre, in whose centre rose a graceful little hill, its sides clad with vineyards, and its summit crowned with the village of Kefr Kûk. On its right is a range of wooded hills, rent by ravines ; beyond it are the green slopes on which stand Rasheiya and 'Aiha ; while on the left it is shut in by lofty mountains, over which towers snow-capped Hermon.

We descended the slope and crossed the plain to Kefr Kûk, where we found some ancient ruins, round a reservoir. Resuming our journey we travelled southward, past 'Aiha, which also contains ancient remains, and then ascended the vine-clad slope to Rasheiya, which we reached about four o'clock, and pitched our tent beneath the shade of a walnut, in the valley on the south.

We were soon visited by two interesting boys, grandsons of the Emîr Effendi, a scion of the princely house of Shehâb, and governor of the district of Rasheiya. Having expressed a desire to obtain a view of the surrounding country, they invited us to the palace, from the roof of which there is a commanding prospect. On reaching the palace it was necessary we should first pay our respects to the Emîr, and we were ushered into a room where we found him seated at an open window, gazing on the magnificent alpine scenery. He rose as we entered, invited us to a seat by his side, and, after the customary salutations, ordered pipes and coffee. Learning that it was our intention to ascend Hermon, he told us of ruins on its summit of which we had never heard before. He also assured us, in answer to our questions, that there are large numbers of bears on the mountain, which at the present season commit great ravages on the vineyards along its base. We inquired about leopards, and he said they were still found. We were as much struck by the intelligence of the aged prince as by his gentle manners,

dignified mien, and venerable aspect, set off by a flowing beard white as the snow on Hermon. After taking formal leave, and politely declining his pressing invitation to make the palace our home, we were accompanied by two of his sons to the summit of an ancient tower connected with the palace. The whole country was spread out before us like a map; and as the young emirs kindly told us the names of the villages in sight, we noted them down. Hosts of servants and retainers had assembled in the courtyard ere we descended to look at the strangers, and bright eyes were flashing through the *jalousies* of the harim. As we wound our way through crowds of armed men, and prancing horses richly caparisoned, we could not but think that, were the costume slightly changed, the palace of Rasheiya would pass for an English baronial hall of 500 years ago.

August 3 1st.—Having procured a guide, we prepared to set out for the summit of Hermon. Some time was required to fasten on our water-jars and pack our provisions, including a basket of grapes, a *bakhshish* from a friendly *natir*. We mounted at 6.25. After riding a few minutes down the valley, we turned to the left, with our faces to the mountain-top, now beautifully penciled on the background of a deep blue sky. Following the windings of a vale for forty minutes, amid vineyards and fig-trees, we reached a little plain. Our path led across it among dense foliage and clustering vines. In twenty minutes we arrived at the mouth of a wild ravine. The ascent now began. The whole way to the summit was difficult and laborious. There is no regular path, but our stalwart guide led on, now following the bed of a winter torrent, now scrambling over a shelving bank, and now zig-zagging up the steep slope. The surface of the mountain is covered with loose fragments of limestone. As we advanced the stones put in motion by the leaders of the party touched others below them, and these giving their impetus to others, the ripple spread till the whole hill-side seemed flowing like a torrent. Those in the rear were sometimes endangered by a larger block set in motion. At 9.40 we dismounted at a small fountain.

There being no water higher up, we determined to halt here till evening, and then proceed to the top and make arrangements for the night. Wishing, however, to see and explore as far as practicable the southern range, I mounted, and, taking the guide, wandered along the mountain-side. I soon found that the ravines which ran at right angles to my route could not easily be passed on horseback; so, leaving my horse with the guide, I set out alone. After crossing several valleys and ridges, I came to a point where I saw, far below on the right, Wady et-Teim and Merj 'Ayûn, with the plain of Hûleh beyond. On my left were the plateaux of Jedûr and Jaulân, and before me a ridge running from Hermon nearly due south. The whole of this chain, which is lower than Hermon, as seen by the eye and carefully examined by a telescope, presented the same general aspect as the mountain on which I stood—white and naked rocks, with intervening slopes of loose stones. The only signs of vegetable life are small plants near the summit; and these, so far as I could see, consisted of but two varieties—a dark velvety plant which, springing from a single stalk, rises to the height of about six inches, and spreads over the ground like a circular cushion; the other, that drab-coloured prickly shrub one meets with in every part of the Syrian desert, and which appears as sapless as the stones and shingle among which it grows.

I examined with some care the geological features of Hermon, as I had been informed Lieut. Lynch had seen traces of granite on his journey from Hasbeiya to Damascus. This does not appear in his published work, nor in the 'Official Report,' but I understood that he had made such a statement in the first sketches of the expedition given in newspapers. In his work he says, "As we descended, the limestone rock disappeared, giving place to sandstone and trap; and, lower down, *serpentine* occasionally cropped out." He must here refer to the spurs which run eastward from Hermon, and not to the mountain itself. I have passed round about three-fourths of its base, and have marked well the height to which the trap ascends; and this is pretty

uniform. The whole mountain is limestone, similar in texture to that along the ridge of Lebanon. The only fossils I perceived were corals.

Leaving the spot I had gained on the top of the ridge, I turned toward the summit. An hour's smart climbing brought me to a peak, separated from a still loftier one to the north by a valley some 200 feet deep, on the sides of which were banks of snow. I now descended a ravine to the place where I had left my horse, and returned to the fountain.

At 4.30 I mounted again, and at 5.30 stood on the summit. I shall not soon forget the impression made upon my mind by the magnificent panorama. I could scarce realize the thought that my feet stood on that sacred mountain of which prophets had written; and that the whole Land of Israel was before me. And yet it was so! Looking westward, that expanse of water, gleaming like burnished gold beneath the rays of the sinking sun, is the "Great Sea," the border of the "Promised Land." On that low promontory jutting out behind those mountains stands Tyre; and those mountains are Lebanon. That blue ridge far away to the south is Carmel, and the broad plain of Esdraelon stretches along its base, with Jezreel and Shunem, Endor and Tabor, Nain and Nazareth, on its borders. Here on the south, deeply depressed, lies the Sea of Galilee; and the narrow valley running away beyond marks the course of the Jordan. The hills on the left bank of the Jordan are the hills of Gilead; and the plateau on this side of them, extending eastward, is the "Land of Bashan." On the north are the parallel ridges of Lebanon and Antilebanon, enclosing the valley of Coelesyria. At the eastern base of Antilebanon is a broad plain covered with verdure; and the eye can just detect a bright speck in the centre of it—that is Damascus, the oldest city in the world.

The arrival of my companions roused me from a pleasing reverie, and, having issued orders for the arrangement of the tent, we proceeded to examine the summits of Hermon.

These are three. The loftiest is on the north, commanding a view of Cœlesyria, with the mountain-ranges on each side. The next is 200 or 300 yards south, and overlooks the sources of the 'Awaj, and the eastern plain. The difference in altitude between these two cannot be more than a few feet. The third peak is about a quarter of a mile west of the latter. It is 100 feet lower than the others. On the north-west and south-east the declivity is steep and rapid from these peaks, while on the north-east and south the sides slope more gently for upwards of 2000 feet, to lower ridges which run out in those directions.

On the second of the summits we discovered curious and interesting ruins. In passing over a rocky projection on our way to it from the first peak, our guide pointed out the mouth of a large artificial cave; beside it lay a fragment of a column and a number of hewn stones. As we ascended the peak we found more extensive remains. Round a rock which rises to a height of fifteen feet, are the foundations of a circular wall of stone, of great antiquity. This ring is about sixty yards in diameter; and in the centre of the rock is a rude excavation eight feet deep. Within the enclosure, on the very brow of the mountain, are heaps of hewn stones, some of them beveled. Among the stones we were able to trace the foundations of a small temple. A friend who afterwards visited it informed me that he had discovered on one of the stones a fragment of a Greek inscription. The style of the building is simple. I thought I could recognise two eras in these ruins. The stones of the temple were apparently of a later date than those of the *ring*. But who were the founders of structures so strangely situated, difficult of access, far from human habitation, and, for the greater part of each year, deeply imbedded in snow? What was the object for which they were erected, and what is their probable date? On three peaks of Antilebanon I found ruins of great antiquity; but none of them had the circular *ring*, which seems to be the simplest, and probably most primitive, form of sacred architecture. The Druidical

rings of the British islands are well known, and one of these which I have sometimes visited on the top of Mount Greenan, near Londonderry, is similar in structure to that on Hermon, and commands, like it, an extensive view *eastward*. We know that in early ages the summits of mountains were almost universally selected for the performance of sacred rites and the worship of the gods. Especially does this seem to have been the case in Syria; and the Israelites were enjoined "utterly to destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, *upon the high mountains, and upon the hills;*" at a later period they were threatened with judgments because "they set them up images and groves in *every high hill*, and under every green tree; and there they burnt incense in all the high places, *as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them.*" When such were the feelings and practices of ancient devotees, the peak of Hermon would soon be selected for the erection of an altar and the burning of a sacred fire. The view there obtained of the sun's course, from his rising in the eastern desert to his setting in the Great Sea, would designate it as a fit locality for his worship. This spot I consider, therefore, as one of the most interesting as well as one of the most ancient sanctuaries in this land. Nor are we destitute of direct evidence in favour of this view. In two passages of Scripture the name *Baal-Hermon* is applied to this mountain, and the only reason which can be assigned is, that Baal was there worshipped. Jerome also states that on the summit of Hermon there was a remarkable temple.

As we stood amid these ruins, in the very spot, in the centre of that ring, where of yore the sacred fire burned, and looked westward over mountain and hill, and far away beyond, along a line of burnished gold which gleamed on the surface of the water, to the bright orb whose departing splendour illumined sea and sky, we could scarcely wonder that men, unenlightened by inspiration, should have adored such an object. The setting sun presented strange and beautiful forms from this point of view. A stratum of

purple-coloured haze ran round the horizon. As the sun dipped into it he seemed to be converted into a series of rings, arranged in the form of a double cone; in a little time the upper cone disappeared, and the under one remained like a huge top balanced on the horizon; and this gradually became flatter, and spread out, until at last it suddenly disappeared. The view eastward was scarcely less striking. The shadow of the mountain fell on the plain like a great pyramid—larger and larger it grew, until its apex touched the horizon. Then it raised its top, figured on the sky as it had been on the earth, and at last, as the sun touched the water, it stood before us a vast aerial pyramid, with its broad base on the earth and its top in the heavens.

When it became dark we set fire to the dry shrubs that cover the mountain-top, and in a short time the summit was one sheet of flame. This was the signal to our friends in Bludân of our safe arrival. As we left our *Baal-fire* to go to our tent, the moon rose, and we were permitted to witness another magnificent scene as each peak and precipice was in succession tinged with her silvery light.

September 1st.—At the dawn we were shivering on the loftiest peak of Hermon. The thermometer, which stood at 52° at sunset in the tent, was 41° when we rose; and on the summit the cold was still more intense, for a biting wind was blowing.

My object now was to examine and sketch the outlines of the Antilebanon range, which lay before me like an embossed map, and to mark the upper sources of the river 'Awaj on the eastern slopes of Hermon. Ample details of my observations having already appeared elsewhere, I will not therefore weary my reader with recapitulation.

A lofty spur runs out from Hermon eastward toward Damascus, and on its southern side is a deep ravine, called by my guide Wady Barbar, which is, doubtless, the Arabic form of *Pharpar*. Near its extremity, where it opens into the plain, is the village Kûl'at Jendal, with ruins. South of this village is a peak, the termination of another spur that

projects from the mountain; and south of this again is a valley, wider, deeper, and longer than the former, which seems to open Hermon to its centre. From the spot on which I stood there is an unbroken descent to the bosom of this valley, and there, beneath the brow of the mountain, are a number of small fountains whose waters unite beside the village of 'Arny, forming a large stream, which enters the plain and winds across it to S'as'a. This is the north and principal branch of the river '*Awaj*, the ancient PHARPAR.

My companions being ready to start, I mounted at 9.45. We descended the western declivity by a steep and dangerous path, and in an hour and a quarter reached a small fountain called 'Ain el-Lauz. From thence, in thirty-five minutes, we arrived at a deep wady, which runs from Rasheiya along the base of Hermon. Crossing it, we ascended a range of picturesque hills, and, having reached the summit, we had before us a beautiful valley shut in by wooded heights, and running down to Wady et-Teim. The little village of Sh'att, with some ancient ruins, lies in its bosom, embowered in the foliage of giant walnuts. As we passed through the gardens below the village, the grapes hung in festoons from the branches of the trees that overshadowed our path, and the fences on each side were covered with the tempting fruit. In another hour we passed through Kufeir, and fifty minutes afterwards entered Mîmis, both of these being situated in rich valleys similar in character and scenery to that of Sh'att. An hour more brought us to the palace of the Emîrs of Hasbeiya.

Hasbeiya, with its gardens and terraced vine and olive yards, has been often visited and described, and I will not add a word to the full details that may be found elsewhere.

September 2nd.—We left Hasbeiya at 8.5, and descended the ravine to Wady et-Teim to visit the source of the Upper Jordan. This fine fountain is a short distance to the right of the mouth of the ravine. A large stream flows from it down the wady, southward; and our route led us for a time along its right bank. The valley is rich and picturesque.

In an hour and a half we passed Sûk el-Khan, a large deserted caravanserai where a weekly fair is held.

At 12.20 we entered the Hûleh, and forty minutes afterwards were sitting beneath a noble oak-tree beside the fountain of *Dan*—now Tell el-Kâdy. We spent two hours wandering among the luxuriant herbage and dense coppice that cover this interesting site. An Arab encampment was spread around, and hundreds of sheep, oxen, and camels wandered at will over the plain.

The tell is cup-shaped. It is in part artificial and in part natural. It appears to have been the crater of a volcano, and when selected as the site of a city the natural rim was scarped, and probably a wall was built along its summit. On the north and north-west are heaps of stones scattered over the plain, which appear to have been at one time used in buildings. The tell is now so overgrown with rank vegetation that it is difficult to ascertain what traces may remain of the ancient city.

Within the circular rim is a fountain shaded by oak and terebinth trees. The stream from it flows out on the south side, turning several mills in its course. But on the west side of the tell is the great fountain, bursting from its base. The waters form a large pond, from which they flow southward, a rapid river. This is the principal source of the *Jordan*, and the desolate ruins round it are the only remains of the ancient border city of Dan, and the more ancient Sidonian Laish.

From Tell el-Kâdy an hour's ride across a plain, and up easy slopes through forests of oak, brought us to Bâniâs, the *Cæsarea Philippi* of the New Testament. Our steps were first directed to the fountain where once stood the temple built by Herod. We afterwards wandered for hours among the ruins, where hewn stones, massive foundations, and fragments of granite columns, testify alike to former strength and grandeur. The site, unlike most others in Palestine, is not less remarkable for natural beauty than for classic and sacred associations. Here are rugged mountain and wooded vale, battlemented height and gushing stream,

crumbling ruin and wide-spreading plain, all combined in one glorious picture. But as I stood and gazed I could not but feel that a deeper and holier interest is attached to the spot than natural scenery or historic association can confer. Its soil was trodden by the feet of the SON OF GOD. Beneath the shadow of that precipice, and along the banks of that stream, our Lord and His disciples wandered; within those walls the lips of the Saviour unfolded Gospel Truth to men whose dust now mingles with kindred earth; and on one of those peaks above, Peter, James, and John obtained a glimpse of heaven's glory in the Transfiguration.

As we sat in our tent in the still evening an armed retainer of the sheikh was announced on business. Being introduced, he said the country was in a state of rebellion, the Arabs were close to the village, and robbers infested the neighbourhood: his master, therefore, would not be answerable for the safety of our persons or property unless we engaged a watch for the night. I replied that our persons we were prepared and able to protect, and that, as our property was *within* the village, and as the sheikh, according to his own admission, had power to protect it by placing guards, I would hold him responsible for anything that might be stolen; but I would neither employ nor pay a guard. We got no reply, and nothing was stolen.

September 3rd.—We rose at daybreak, and, having engaged a guide to Beit Jenn, mounted at 4.50. Our first point was the castle; and leaving our muleteers to follow the ordinary road, we struck up the hill, and after an hour's hard climbing were within its walls. Its great strength, vast extent, beautiful masonry, and splendid situation, surpassed my expectations. The antiquary here sees much to wonder at, and the lover of nature much to admire. The castle covers the narrow summit of a hill, and is in form oblong. At each end is a keep or citadel, capable of separate defence. This castle must be of remote antiquity; but I have not been able to find any notice of it in history before the time of the crusades, and I sought in vain for ancient inscriptions among its ruins.

We left at 7.15, and followed the path along the summit of the ridge that connects the castle with the mountains on the east. We now ascended through groves of oaks, having on each side wild ravines, and in an hour and a half reached the summit. A large and well-cultivated plain was here before us, encompassed by wooded heights. It is called Merj el-Yafûry. Along its southern extremity, near the singular lake called Birket er-Ram, the *Phiala* of Josephus, runs the Roman road, from Bâniâs across the mountain-range, to Damascus. Traces of it may be seen in many places.

We reached 'Ain et-Tin at 9.45. The country is wild and desolate, but rich soil is found between the boulders and projecting cliffs of basalt, which would repay cultivation. Travelling was said to be unsafe owing to the hostile attitude assumed by the Druzes in opposition to the conscription. Both at Hasbeiya and Bâniâs attempts had been made to dissuade us from taking this route; and our guide, though well known in the district, seemed much alarmed. All the people we met were armed, and we observed that the husbandman carried his gun while engaged in the labours of the field. The appearance of the people was far from prepossessing; and never hitherto, not even in the deserts of Palmyra, when enjoying the comforts of a Bedawy prison, had I seen such savage-looking men. We were, however, a strong party and well armed; and we knew that Arabs would be chary of attacking Franks under such circumstances. Our numbers and strength were still further augmented by two armed cavaliers whom we found awaiting our arrival at 'Ain et-Tin. They had joined our party at Bâniâs, but pursued their route thus far while we were engaged in examining the castle. Not deeming it safe, however, to go farther without us, they stopped at the fountain till we came up.

We crossed a ridge, and entered a fertile plain called Merj el-Hather. It is encompassed by low wooded heights, except on the west, from which rises the great ridge of Hermon. The forests of oak which clothe the mountain-

sides are fast falling beneath the axe of the charcoal-burner.

We struck through the fields directly across the plain, leaving the ordinary road on our right. We had commenced the gentle ascent on the north-east, when a wild-looking Druze darted from among the oak-trees, and demanded of our guide whether the muleteers in the rear belonged to us. He answered hesitatingly, and tried to evade the question ; but I said at once that they did. He then said that, if they had not been in our employment, they never would have left the plain alive. On demanding the cause of such strange words, he replied that I was at liberty to walk over his fields and eat his maize, but if another did it the earth would drink his blood. I replied we were strangers, and did not know the road ; and that, if we had injured anything, or our muleteers had taken anything, we would pay for it. He said, " You are Englishmen, and I am your slave ; my fields are yours, and you have a right to all." And in a moment he was out of sight again. It is no unusual thing in this land for muleteers and others who are in the employment of travellers to commit depredations on the fields and orchards of the villages they pass through, knowing they are safe under the protection of their masters.

We reached a rocky plateau, which the guide informed us was the most dangerous part of the road, where travellers were often plundered and stripped by wandering parties of Arabs. On this very spot, two years ago, a party of Englishmen, with a lady in company, were attacked and robbed, and, according to the usual Arab custom, stripped of every article of dress, and left to pursue their journey to Damascus. No such romantic adventure awaited us, and we went on our way in peace.

At 11.30 we reached the brow of a deep valley. Following its course eastward for twenty minutes, we came to a place where it falls into another ravine ; and here, at the point of junction, stands the village of Beit Jenn. A stream comes down the wady, and flows through the centre of the village : its source, I was informed, is at the foot of Jebel

esh-Sheikh, and is separated from the fountain at 'Army by a lofty ridge. This is the second source of the river 'Awaj, the ancient PHARPAR.

The sides of this wady are precipices of rock, white and broken; and these contrast well with the rich foliage of the poplars, walnuts, and apricots that line the banks of the stream. Above the houses the cliffs are honeycombed with tombs; but with the exception of a few hewn stones in the walls of the gardens, I saw no other traces of antiquity.

Leaving Beit Jenn, we followed the stream down the ravine to 'Ain Beit Jenn, a large fountain on the right bank. In fifteen minutes more we emerged upon the plain. From hence the river runs in a deep channel to S'as'a, distant eight miles, and there joins the stream from 'Army. I now rode along the fertile plain, close to the foot of the mountains, and reached Kefr Hauwar at three o'clock.

Leaving my companions to enjoy the shade in the gardens of Kefr Hauwar, I wandered to the summit of a tell, on which stands the *tower* mentioned by Burckhardt. It is a small modern house, and may probably have been originally a Druze place of worship. The view from it is extensive. Toward Haurân the country is one uniform plain, slightly undulating, with conical hills at intervals. Some of these are cup-shaped, and evidently old craters. Nahr 'Army runs in a deep channel to S'as'a, passing only one village on its way. It is strange that Burckhardt does not mention this river, though he passed it between Kefr Hauwar and Beitfima. From this point I was able to take in at one glance the section of the plain through which the 'Awaj winds from where its branches leave the mountain defiles to their junction at S'as'a, and from thence till the river passes between the parallel ridges of Jebel el-Aswad and Jebel Mâni'a. Though it cannot be compared with the magnificent plain watered by the Barada, yet it contains not less than sixty square miles of land, whose fertility is solely owing to the river, and it supports a population of nearly 10,000 souls. I formerly entertained the opinion that the 'Awaj was but a small stream, now I saw that it is unquestionably the *second*

river of Damascus. I have since examined the 'Awaj at many points, from its fountains on the side of Hermon to the lake in the distant plain; I have visited and examined *all* the other streams and fountains in this region; and I feel persuaded that, if Naaman meant *two rivers*, and not *two fountains*, when he uttered the words, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, *rivers* of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" the *Barada* and 'Awaj must be the two.

The province in which the fountains of the 'Awaj are situated is called Bellân. Originally it formed part of the territory of the Maachathites. Under the Romans it first constituted part of the kingdom of Chalcis, but was afterwards annexed to the tetrarchy of Abilene, of which Lysanias was governor.

September 4th.—We left Kefr Hauwar at 4.30, crossed the river 'Army twelve minutes afterwards, and rode up the north bank to the half-ruined village of Beitma. We passed over an undulating plain, having the base of Hermon about an hour on our left. At 5.40 we crossed a deep wady with a very small stream which flows down from the wild glen of Barbar. At seven o'clock we entered Katâna.

Around Katâna are fine gardens and fields, watered by a stream whose source is a quarter of an hour to the west. On the map attached to Burckhardt's 'Travels in Syria' a river is laid down, having its source high up in Hermon, and flowing past Katâna to the lake east of Damascus; and all subsequent cartographers have copied it, some with additions and alterations. This river is purely imaginary. The stream from Katâna is exhausted before it runs three miles from its fountain.

We left Katâna at 7.15, and followed the ordinary road to Damascus. It is a desert plain, but it only requires water to make it a paradise. At nine o'clock we passed the village of Muaddamiyeh, and soon after entered extensive vineyards. A large canal from the 'Awaj is conducted along the plain to this place, and, turning down half a mile to the east, it meets another from the Barada, and thus the Abana and Pharpar mingle their waters near Damascus. No contrast

could be greater than that between the section of the plain which is irrigated and that not irrigated—the former, rich and fertile, covered with vines, and groves of olives and mulberries; the latter a bare desert, burned up by a scorching sun, and without a particle of verdure.

In half an hour more we were within the gardens of Damascus, pursuing our journey amid delicious groves, sheltered from the sun's rays by the foliage of the walnut, and regaled with the murmur of waters and the voice of birds.

CHAPTER VII.

HELBON.

Grand defile of M'araba — Menîn and its excavated temples — The vale and vineyards of Helbon — Sublime pass of 'Ain es-Sâheb — The site of Helbon identified — Greek inscriptions — Ride over Antilebanon.

HAVING remained in Damascus two days, we set out for Bludân on the morning of Tuesday, the 7th of September, intending to visit on our way the excavated temples of Menîn and the site of *Helbon*. As these interesting places have never been described, I shall give a brief sketch of our researches.

Leaving the city by St. Thomas' Gate, we rode across the plain to Burzeh, where we entered the wild defile which here intersects the lowest ridge of Antilebanon, and in an hour and a half reached the picturesque village of M'araba. At this point we turned to the right up Wady Menîn. Our ride was delightful: a gentle breeze blew among the trees, cooled by the waters that leaped and foamed in their rocky bed at our feet. The rays of the sun beat fiercely upon the white hills around, but here, beneath the spreading branches of the walnut, we could defy them. Forty minutes from M'araba we reached Tell, situated, as the name implies, on the summit of an eminence, and evidently occupying an ancient site. Large stones and fragments of columns may be seen in the modern houses and court-yards, while the rocks around are filled with excavated tombs.

Passing on, we followed the left bank of the valley, which increases in depth and beauty. The scenery is very striking. The valley runs in a tortuous course, like a river of verdure, while its banks rise naked, smooth, and almost white as

snow, and are here and there surmounted, far overhead, by cliffs, like baronial castles. We again descended to the bed of the river, and entered a gloomy defile, with precipices of rock on each side, and the narrow path, which has been hewn out for the road, wet with the spray and foam of the river. This pass led us into a valley, like an amphitheatre, with vine-clad glens radiating from it, and lofty ridges of rock dividing them. In the centre of the basin is a low hill, on which stands the village of Menfin. We rode through it, and dismounted at the fountain on the other side. It bursts from the foot of a precipice, and the stream sweeps round the southern side of the tell, fringed by poplars, and lined with orchards. In the cliff overhead are numerous sepulchral caves; but in the brow of a crag on the north are the most interesting remains. As we ascended the steep slope, our attention was first arrested by massive hewn stones: one of these measured 12 feet in length, and had a plain moulding along one side, as if intended for the upright of a door. On the top we found its fellow standing erect, and soon saw that it had been hewn out of the solid rock, to which the lower part was still attached. Behind this is a small temple 24 feet long, 17 wide, and about 22 high, with a vaulted roof, excavated in the rock. The doorway is much broken, but the remains of a small portico are still there, with columns, steps, and balustrades all hewn in the rock. On the north side is another excavated chamber, smaller, but similar in plan. The doorway is nearly perfect, and has a border 2 feet wide, richly ornamented with wreaths and flowers, and over it a cornice of still greater beauty.

In front of these chambers, at the distance of 50 feet, stood a fine building facing the south. The foundations alone remain: these were in part hewn out of the rock, and the walls are chiseled to represent mason-work. In front was a portico of four columns, 3 feet 5 inches in diameter. A staircase, with balustrades, all hewn out of the rock, led to it. Numerous buildings seem to have stood upon the sides of this hill, but they are now masses of con-

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fused ruins. Ascending to the summit of the cliff, I saw other foundations, and a large excavated cistern coated with cement.

The object of these expensive monuments cannot be ascertained. They do not resemble the tombs scattered over this land and among these mountains. They are larger and loftier, and want the loculi universally found in sepulchral caves. In all probability they were temples dedicated to the deities of the town.

Leaving Menîn, we turned westward, and rode through vineyards and fig orchards, which cover the vales and hills as far as Wady Helbôn. In fifty minutes we reached the valley of Helbôn. The scenery at the place we entered it is wild and grand. The bottom is filled with vineyards and pomegranates; and to the terraced sides above fig-trees cling. On descending we had, close on our right, a wall of rock several hundred feet high, with a huge fissure dividing it in the centre. Through this fissure rushes a stream, and a narrow roadway has been hewn in the side of the cliff above it. This is the entrance to the upper valley of Helbôn. Near the summit of the cliff are two sarcophagi with small niches, having fragments of statues over them, all hewn in the rock. On the side of one is a Greek inscription, simple and chaste as epitaphs ought to be, but affording no clue to the age of the monument or the rank of its occupant: "The memorial of Lysimachus, the son of Adrus."

About 100 yards farther west is another monument; and some distance beyond it is a Doric façade, with a bust in the centre.

Following the excavated road through the pass, we entered the upper valley of Helbôn. The pass is only a few yards in length, and on the inner side is a sublime gorge with overhanging cliffs, and a fountain bubbling up at their base. An aqueduct has been hewn out for it along the side of the precipice, and a bridge in the very centre of the pass carries it over the river, where it drives a mill, and then flows off to water the vineyards and orchards below. The

fountain is called 'Ain es-Sâheb. A short distance above it the glen expands, and is filled with vineyards, and verdant with the foliage of the fig and pomegranate : the steep sides are terraced wherever the industrious peasants can find a footing.

Winding along the left bank for half an hour, we skirt a projecting ridge, and a scene of wild grandeur and beauty opens before us. At our feet is a vale filled with masses of richest foliage ; the mountain-sides rise up, here and there terraced for the vine, but in general steep and naked ; while 2000 feet above are cliffs of bare white rock, wrought into yawning caverns and fantastic forms by the action of the elements. In a little recess are the white minaret and terraced roofs of HELBON, just appearing over the tops of fruit-trees. As we approach along the tortuous lanes, under the shade of fig-trees and poplars, we observe heaps of hewn stones piled up in the terraces and garden-walls, with broken shafts and fragments of moulded friezes and cornices. On entering the village a small modern portico erected over the fountain attracts our attention. It is supported by spiral columns with Corinthian capitals. Beneath is a massive stone, now serving as a water-trough, on the side of which is a fragment of a Greek inscription in large and well-formed characters.

In the gardens beside the village are the foundations of a large structure, the ruins of which are strewn around. Two fragments of inscriptions are found on broken stones near it, and many others exist in several parts of the village. All of them, however, are either so short, or have been so much mutilated, that no information can be obtained from them.

The name Helbôn suggests that passage in Ezekiel where the prophet, describing the glory and luxuries of Tyre, and of the nations and cities that traded in her marts, says, "Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches ; *in the wine of HELBON* and white wool." The force of the description consists in this : that in the markets of Tyre every kingdom

and city found demand *for its own staple produce or manufactures*. Damascus has been long famed for its brocades, ornaments of precious metals, and arms. It was thus the merchant of Tyre in the multitude of wares and of all riches. Damascus has for ages been the depôt for the wool of the flocks that roam over the Arabian plains, and consequently traded in wool in the marts of Tyre. The *wine of Helbon* was another commodity supplied by the Damascenes. Is it not natural to suppose that *it* also was produced in the neighbourhood of the city? In some of the ancient versions, such as the Syriac and Vulgate, the word *Helbon* is translated as descriptive of the quality of the wine, "fat," or "rich;" but in the Septuagint, and by modern critics, it is regarded as a proper name.

It has been generally thought that Aleppo, called *Haleb* by the Arabs, is the place referred to by the Prophet. Ptolemy mentions a Chalybon among the cities of Syria; and Strabo says the kings of Persia, from their love of luxuries, drank "Chalybonian wine of Syria." But if we even should admit that Haleb is the Chalybon of Strabo and Ptolemy, there are strong reasons against our identifying it with the *Helbon* of Scripture. The *words*, it will be observed, are not the same; but the great objection lies in the situation. Why should not the people of Chalybon themselves carry their wine to Tyre? Tyre, in those days, was much more easy of access to Aleppo than Damascus.

These facts render the identification of Helbon and Aleppo highly improbable; and there is, besides, no evidence that the grapes of Aleppo are such as would make wine of a fine quality. Here, however, in the territory of Damascus, is a site, manifestly of high antiquity, whose name is *identical* with that mentioned by Ezekiel. The Arabic Helbôn corresponds precisely to the Hebrew; and the territory is celebrated for producing the finest grapes in the country. The inhabitants are now Muslims, and consequently the manufacture of wine is not carried on by them, but the grapes of the district are held in the greatest esteem by the vintners of Damascus. In the whole of this wild and beau-

tiful valley, and throughout the district subject to the village, *the vine is the staple produce*, and it was at one time far more extensively cultivated. I have therefore no hesitation in stating that we have here the *Helbon* of Ezekiel, whose wine was conveyed by the merchants of Damascus to the marts of Tyre : and this affords an additional proof of how exact and consistent the sacred writers were in all their statements.

Leaving this interesting spot, which I have since visited frequently, we continued our course up the wild glen, winding along the banks of streams, beneath the shade of walnut and apricot trees. In half an hour we reached the upper fountain, which gushes from a cleft at the foot of a cliff. The grandeur of the scenery around this fountain is beyond description. A turn in the valley shuts out all view of the verdure below, and naked mountain-sides rise bare and steep to toppling cliffs, and the cliffs themselves seem to touch the clouds, while the valley is filled with fragments of rock, as if Nature had been engaged in some fearful work of destruction.

The road from hence becomes dreary and monotonous ; only a few walnuts appear at intervals ; even the vineyards soon disappear from the slopes, and all is barren and desolate, save where the sparse foliage of the *sumak* fills up little nooks and corners among the rocks. Yet even here are remains of the taste and wealth of Syria's inhabitants in past ages. Over the summit of a rounded peak on the mountain-side are scattered the ruins of a fine temple. The style was massive, simple, and severe, resembling that at Mejdél 'Anjar, near Chalcis.

A ride of two hours over barren mountains brought us to Wady Hureiry. In thirty-five minutes more we stood on the brow of the central ridge of Antilebanon, commanding a view which for extent and beauty is not surpassed in this region. The vine-clad slopes of Bludân are at our feet, extending to the orchards and plain of Zebdâny ; beyond them is a range of dark mountains, over which are seen wooded hills, with vales winding down to the plain of

Buká'a ; while beyond all, the chain of Lebanon, with its wavy summit, is before us, from the peaks of Akkâr to the ravine of the Litâny ; and on the left the view is shut in by Hermon.

Half an hour more down the steep declivity brought us to Bludân.



Kurdish Shepherd.

CHAPTER VIII.

EASTERN SLOPES OF ANTILEBANON, AND PLAIN
OF DAMASCUS.

Roman road — Beautiful view of the Ghûtah — Convent of Saidnâya — Miraculous image of the Virgin — Ancient tombs and ruins — Saidnâya, the ancient Danaba — Ravine and sepulchral caves of 'Jubb 'Adîn — M'alûla — Wild pass and excavated tombs — The Syriac language spoken — Yabrûd, the ancient Jabruda, and its ruins — Night march to Kuteifeh — Dangers of travel — Fine temple at Maksâra — Ruined town discovered.

ON the 19th of October, 1852, I set out, in company with the Rev. S. Robson and the Rev. J. Barnett, to visit Saidnâya, M'alûla, and Yabrûd. As the country through which we proposed to travel is little known, we determined to examine its topography and antiquities as closely as time would permit. Having only three days to spare for the survey of a wide district, we dispensed with tents and

equipage ; we were thus able to traverse with speed the wide plateaus and mountain-ranges, and to diverge from the more frequented roads whenever inclination prompted, or any object of interest attracted attention.

We followed the same route as on a previous tour to Burzeh. A few minutes afterwards we commenced to ascend the hills that bound the plain, by an ancient road cut in the rock. The ascent soon became steep, and even dangerous. The old road zigzags up ledges of naked rock in a series of staircases ; but these are so much worn that it was with difficulty our horses could keep their feet. Here and there, too, huge masses of limestone had fallen from the cliffs above, and blocked up the narrow way.

At 7.50 we reached the top of the pass, where we turned to gaze on the magnificent plain. The richest part of the Ghûtah was before us, and exhibited in the best light for revealing its beauty. A thousand streams, meandering through orchard, meadow, and plain, reflected the beams of the morning sun ; the city itself lay in the midst like a string of pearls on a mantle of green velvet. On the west was another view, different, but scarcely less pleasing. The valley of Menîn, filled with foliage, runs across the white Sahra, encompassing the village of Tell, and sending out numerous green branches among snow-white hills.

As we rode down the easy slope into the plain of Sahra, a troop of gazelles crossed our path : putting spurs to my horse, I dashed into the midst of them ; but the ground being rocky, I was soon obliged to give up the chase.

In descending we passed a vale filled with vineyards, extending down on the left to the picturesque basin of Menîn ; and then, crossing a ridge, we entered the plain of Saidnâya. It is perfectly level, and its soil is almost equal to that of the Ghûtah. There is no water for irrigation ; but as it has a considerable elevation, more rain falls upon it, and the heat of summer is not so excessive. On our right we saw the Christian village of Ma'arra, half an hour distant, with the bare summit of Jebel Tintyeh rising beyond it. We passed the plain, and, on surmounting a spur from

the mountains on the left, we suddenly came in sight of the convent and village of Saidnâya—the former occupying the summit of a ledge of rock in the midst of a rugged valley, and the houses of the latter scattered along its base and clinging to its sides. On the spot where we stood is a cubical structure of massive hewn stones, like the pedestal of a column or statue.

The position and aspect of the convent remind one of a feudal castle of the middle ages rather than a peaceful retreat of piety and virtue. The massive walls stand on the summit of a scarped rock ; and the only mode of access is by a winding staircase hewn in its side, leading to a narrow door plated with iron.

The grand attraction of the convent is the "Lady Chapel," where the wonder-working *image-picture* of the Virgin is enshrined. Having expressed a desire to pay it a visit, we were admitted after some ceremony, and after being obliged to take off hats and boots. The chapel is richly ornamented—the floor of tessellated pavement of marble, and the lower parts of the wall of the same material inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Higher up are rows of silver lamps and pictures of saints. On the eastern side is a silver door, eighteen inches square, opening into a little recess, where the portrait of the Virgin, painted by Luke the Evangelist, is preserved in a silver casket ! It is death to touch it, or even to look at it. The attendant priest assured us that one half of the *portrait* is stone and the other half flesh, and that the miracles wrought by it are without number ! Saidnâya is consequently deemed the holiest shrine of the Virgin connected with the Greek Church in Syria. It is not merely regarded with deepest veneration by the poor and illiterate, but the whole clergy, from the patriarch to the humblest priest, unite in paying homage to the image. The sick and afflicted flock to it from the surrounding country ; and many are the cures chronicled each summer.

In the convent are forty nuns and an abbess ; the latter receives her appointment from the patriarch, and is subject

directly to his authority. She cannot be distinguished in dress or appearance from the others, and seems as illiterate and ignorant as any of them. The dress of the nuns is a long robe of blue calico ; on the head is a large black veil, which can be so arranged as to envelop the whole person. It is similar in all respects, except colour, to the veils worn by the village women.

This convent is of high antiquity, and local tradition ascribes its erection to the Emperor Justinian. When visited by Sir John Mandeville, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, it presented the same appearance as it does at the present day, and was then famous, as now, for the wonder-working image of the Virgin. Maundrell went to it from Damascus during his journey in the year 1697. He repeats the tradition that it was founded by Justinian, and relates the strange legend, still current, about the incarnate picture. He, like Mandeville, bears testimony to the excellence of the wine made here ; and it ought to be remembered that this is in the district of *Helbôn*, to which I have already referred.

In and around the village are many evidences of former wealth and taste. In the cliffs along the mountain-side above it are numerous sepulchral caves hewn in the rock, some of which are spacious, and a few tastefully ornamented. In one on the east side of the rock, on which the convent stands, Maundrell copied three Greek epitaphs from the ends of sarcophagi. One of these contains the date A.D. 198. In the village, a few yards below the convent, is a square tower of fine masonry, which cannot be of a much later date than the tomb where Maundrell found the inscriptions. It stands on a platform composed of three tiers of hewn stones arranged so as to form steps. The interior is vaulted, the arches springing from square piers at the angles, in one of which is a winding staircase leading to the top. The door is on the south, and is ornamented with a plain moulding and pediment : a deep moulding also runs round the top of the building.

From the terraced roof of the convent we had a com-

manding view of the mountain-ranges and plains eastward. Our attention was drawn to a ruin on the summit of Jebel Tinīyeh, which, a priest informed us, had been a convent, but which I supposed to be an ancient *high place*. Above the village and convent rises a rugged mountain to a height of about 5000 feet. It is called Jebel Mar Shurabīn, from a ruined convent on the summit. On its sides are numerous chapels, now in ruins, dedicated to saints of the Greek Church.

We left Saidnāya at 1.10. Riding down the slope, we reached the side of the plain, and turning eastward skirted the base of the mountain among vineyards and fig-orchards.

At 2.50 we had the village of Akaubar a short distance on our right; and three-quarters of an hour afterwards, having despaired of finding either shade or water, we dismounted, and, sitting down on the parched soil, ate our lunch. Ten hours of vigorous exercise had whetted our appetites, and we did ample justice to the viands our servants had brought from the city, notwithstanding the absence of chairs and table, and exposure to the scorching rays of an Eastern sun.

We mounted again at 4.10, and rode towards the mountain-range on our left. We met vast droves of sheep, led by wild-looking shepherds from Kurdistan. The costume of these men is singular. A conical felt cap like that of the Persians, and a square-shaped coat of the same material, opening in front to show the ends of a pair of pistols and the hilt of a scimitar. Two little patches are stitched to the coat, into which is inserted a large club, their ordinary weapon in minor quarrels.¹ Their sheep and goats are small and shaggy, some of the latter having spiral horns of enormous length.

In an hour we turned up a wild gorge through the mountain-chain. A stream trickles along it, and a road was in former days hewn in the side of the cliff, but now it is blocked up by masses of rock from the precipices overhead. The ravine never exceeded twenty feet in width,

¹ See Sketch at head of Chapter.

and at present it is in places so narrow that loaded mules cannot go through; the walls of rock on each side rise to the height of several hundred feet. After winding through this sublime pass we came to a basin-like cavity in which is situated a small village, the cliffs overhanging it on the south being honeycombed with sepulchral caves. My companions thought we had reached M'alûla, and inquired the way to the Convent of St. George; but we were astonished to find that M'alûla and its convent were still a good hour distant, and that the name of the village we had thus by chance entered was Jubb 'Adîn. We would fain have lingered among the tombs to see their structure, and search for some inscription that might record the ancient name of the village, or the date of these monuments; but the sun had already set, and, having wandered from the regular path, we did not wish to be benighted amid the wild glens through which we had yet to wend our weary way.

We turned eastward, and, ascending the steep side of the basin, soon reached the summit, from which we could look down into another, similar to the preceding, but larger. Having crossed it, we came to the brow of a third, still larger and wilder. The mountain-range is here severed in two places, leaving a narrow ridge between the gashes. On the summit of this ridge stands the Convent of St. George, and along the base of the cliff, on its southern side, clusters the village of M'alûla.

The brief twilight was fast waning as we knocked at the gate of the convent: it was thrown open, and we met with a hearty reception from the worthy superior, with whom we were well acquainted. Some of his friends from the city were with him on a visit, and among others the agent of the patriarch Maximus, a shrewd and clever monk. The superior is a Damascene of good family, and, though he has taken the vow of poverty, he is possessed of a considerable amount of property in the city. It is said that the patriarch keeps him here to prevent his relatives exercising such an influence over him as might lead to the alienation of his fortune from the Church. After pipes and coffee, and nearly an

hour passed in interesting conversation, our servant came to inform us that an apartment had been prepared for our use, and that dinner was laid. Our worthy host begged us to lay aside ceremony, and, rising, ushered us to our chamber, where all had been got ready with Eastern despatch.

October 20th.—I have stated that the ledge of rock on which the Convent of St. George stands is separated from the chain, of which it formed a part, by two deep chasms, one on each side. It is lower than the adjoining peaks, and retreats considerably from their line, leaving in front, toward the south, a large open space, now covered with the houses and gardens of M'alûla. The convent is built on a platform of rock near the brow of the ledge, from which there is a precipice of some 200 feet to the houses below. Beyond the ravines the cliffs on each side rise to more than four times that altitude, sloping gently upwards from the north, but presenting bold perpendicular faces to the south. The ravine on the east is the most remarkable. Descending from the convent during a subsequent visit, I entered it near a little fountain. At first the walls of rock on each side are low, but they gradually increase until they attain an altitude of 200 feet or more. The chasm is often not more than three feet wide, and seldom exceeds seven. The sides are jagged and irregular, but the one is an exact impression of the other, showing that in former times the cliffs were united, but by some fearful shock were rent and a path opened up. Near the centre of the pass a huge mass of rock has become detached from the upper part and has fallen to within a few feet of the bottom, where it is wedged between the walls. Toward the south the chasm expands, but enormous blocks of rock have tumbled down, and almost fill it. On emerging, a scene of rare grandeur opens in front. Close on the left, in a cleft of the rock, is the Convent of St. Thecla. On the right is the village, its terraced houses clinging to the steep declivity, while beyond it rises a cliff, whose sides are dotted with sepulchral caves. In front is a sweet vale clothed with the foliage of the walnut and mulberry, among which

broken columns and crumbling ruins are here and there seen, half concealed by terraces and garden walls.

After a hasty walk round the hill on which the convent is built, we proceeded to examine the tombs which fill its sides. So close are these to each other, that in later ages doors of communication were opened between them, and large dwellings formed. In one of them we found a wine-press in full operation, and in the same establishment was a *dibs* manufactory. We did not discover any inscription. We now resolved to scale the cliff on the east, that we might gain a complete view of this section of Antilebanon. The summit did not appear more than seven or eight minutes' distant, yet it took a good half hour's hard climbing. Our toil was well repaid by the magnificent panorama which opened up to us, and the information we obtained regarding the general conformation of the range.

Having completed our observations, we descended, and found a sumptuous breakfast spread for us in the convent. Our morning's walk had prepared us for doing ample justice to it.

M'alûla is a site of remote antiquity, and is doubtless identical with the episcopal city of Magluda, which was subject to Damascus. It is remarkable that the inhabitants still use the Syriac language, and that a few rites peculiar to the Jacobites are observed in marriage ceremonies by both Mohammedans and Christians, though the latter now belong to the Greek and Greek Catholic Churches. The only other places where Syriac is spoken in Syria are the two neighbouring villages of 'Ain et-Tîneh and Bûkh'a. The former is a mile and a half south of M'alûla, and the latter about three miles north-east.

We bade adieu to our worthy host and mounted at ten o'clock. Our route lay up the north side of the basin to the great plateau, which we reached in half an hour. In another half hour we passed the village of Bûkh'a, lying in a bleak valley on our right. A few minutes afterwards we reached the brow of a declivity, leading down into a more fertile part of the plateau; and, away in front of us, through

a break in the ridge, we saw the houses, gardens, and orchards of Yabrûd. An hour and a half's smart riding brought us to Ras el-'Ain, situated at the entrance of the sublime gorge which intersects the ridge, opening a way to Yabrûd. Turning to the right, and winding for a few minutes among vineyards, we entered the ravine, whose sides are naked precipices, dotted, like those of Jubb 'Adin and M'alûla, with sepulchral caves. Five minutes from Ras el-'Ain we reached another large and beautiful fountain gushing from the foot of the cliff on the left. In the meadow on the bank of the stream which flows from it we picketed our horses, while we sat down in the shade beside the waters to enjoy a few minutes' repose and our noonday meal. A friendly *natûr* brought us some bunches of grapes, but we found them sour and unpalatable, notwithstanding their tempting appearance. We were told that it would take another month to ripen them, as both air and soil are cold.

We left this beautiful spot at 1.25, and rode through the ravine, which is not narrow or barren like those we had previously visited, but of considerable width, and filled with orchards. As we advanced, the view in front became more picturesque. The conical summit of a snow-white hill appeared over the trees, while a little to the left the terraced roofs of Yabrûd could be seen through every opening. We entered this populous village at 1.48.

As we passed along the streets I observed remains of ancient buildings of considerable extent. Among them was a square tower, similar to that at Saidnâya. But the principal object of interest is the church, a large structure of high antiquity, constructed of massive stones, the layers near the foundation having in places the Phœnician *bevel*. It is probable that it was originally a temple, and when Christianity became the religion of the empire, it was dedicated to the service of the true God. It appears that it has ever since remained in the hands of the Christians, so that it may be one of the most ancient ecclesiastical structures in this part of Syria.

The name *Yabrūd* suggests the *Jabruda* of Ptolemy, mentioned in connection with Laodicea ad Libanum. It became an episcopal city at a very early period, as its bishop, Genadius, was present at the Council of Nice. As we rode through the streets we were objects of curiosity to men, women, and boys, who flocked round us. There was no insolence or antipathy shown : on the contrary, all seemed anxious we should remain for the night. The inhabitants are robust and healthy, and there is a freshness in their looks and an elasticity in their movements which indicate pure air and freedom from miasma.

We left *Yabrūd* at 2.10, and after half an hour's easy ride up a gentle slope reached the summit of a low ridge which runs diagonally across the plain to Nebk. In half an hour more we were standing in the shade of a large khan in the centre of the village of *Küstül*.

The name *Küstül* suggests the Latin *Castellum*; and it is probable a Roman castle once occupied this site, to protect caravans, and afford shelter to passing travellers.

At 3.15 we mounted and set out at a quick pace along the caravan-road, which runs south-west toward Hermon, whose snow-crowned summit soon came in sight. This is a bleak and dreary region, without tree or verdure. The gravelly soil covers the undulating plain, and the mountains rise up beyond, naked and desolate; while over all we had the unvarying blue sky, and the scorching sun pouring down a torrent of fierce rays upon our heads. We spurred our horses, passing the little cisterns which, in former days, were constructed to supply the wants of the thirsty voyager, but are now, like everything else in this land, ruinous. The road, however, has defied both time and the Turks; and notwithstanding the wear of the one and the neglect of the other, is still good—that is, good for a Syrian road.

In an hour we saw the village of *Kaldûn* high up on the mountains on our left, and in an hour and three-quarters more we entered a narrow defile, which intersects the mountain-chain. The sun had set, and the brief twilight was fast waning; but the moon shone brightly, and the rocks

and cliffs overhead assumed a thousand fantastic shapes, as the silvery light fell upon projecting crags, and left the intervals in gloom. It seemed as if the glen had become tenanted by all the Jâns and Efrîts of the Muslem world. The hoarse call of the partridge and the plaintive cry of the jackal broke in upon the silence of nature. This defile is not always safe even by day, and at night none but large caravans would venture to pass it. We had been warned at Yabrûd of our danger in setting out at so late an hour, but we felt here, as we had often done elsewhere, that the very dreariness of the place was our greatest source of security. In forty minutes we reached the open plain, and thirty-five minutes afterwards entered Kuteifeh.

October 21st.—We were up ere the dawn tinged the eastern hills, and had commenced negotiations for a guide to Maksûra. When we introduced the subject, many a fear was expressed for our safety, and many a doubt suggested whether the Arabs would permit us to pass, at least so comfortably clad as we now were. We were assured a strong guard of villagers would be necessary; but after much talking we persuaded the son of our host to accompany us alone.

At 7.20 we mounted and rode off across the plain due south. On reaching the foot of the hills we struck up a winding valley to the summit of the first ridge. Turning to the left, we followed a narrow path down a barren wady to the side of a desert plain. Large flocks of sheep and goats were scattered over the white hills: one is astonished that they can pick up sufficient herbage on these blasted slopes to sustain life. The shepherds, hale and strong young men, were armed with musket and pistols; and our guide assured us that forays are often made among them by the Bedawin. The scenery increased in grandeur as we advanced. The rocks on each side rose in broken and jagged masses, and the summits of the mountains into towering cliffs.

At length, on surmounting a rugged ridge, the plain of Damascus opened before us, extending westward to the base of Hermon, confined on the south-west by the low

ranges of Aswad and Mâni'a, but towards the south stretching out to Jebel Haurân ; while on the east it is shut in by the graceful group of Tellûl. Our guide seemed anxious and restless as we approached the plain ; he seized his musket with a firmer grasp, examined the lock, and "girded up his raiment," as if preparing for action. Many an exciting tale did he tell of the encounters of his people with the Bedawîn, of his own "hair-breadth 'scapes," and of the danger he now encountered. As we rode along we kept a sharp look-out for wandering bandits. We knew that we had reached the borders of civilization, if we had not already passed them, and that, if any roving party of Bedawîn should appear, we ran a fair chance of being plundered. We looked over the broad expanse of plain lying before us, but we sought in vain for black tent or roving cavalier. The ploughman was there with his oxen, and the shepherd with his few goats, and the peasant with his hoe, all peacefully labouring. Our guide was pleased, and we felt disappointed—perhaps agreeably. Maksûra was before us, and the road straight ; we consequently paid our guide and cantered forward to the village.

Our attention had for some time been attracted by a large building rising high above the flat roofs of the houses, and forming, from its situation on the top of a gentle eminence, a conspicuous object. On entering the gate we proceeded to it through the narrow streets, and, on reaching it, were surprised at the size, beauty, and completeness of the structure. It is a Corinthian temple, perhaps unique in design. At each end is a pediment supported on semi-columns, in the centre of which is an arched doorway ornamented with pilasters and deep mouldings. The cornice and frieze of the pediment are carried round the whole building and supported by pilasters. The exterior doors admit to small vestibules, and these open by arched doorways into the cell, which is nearly square ; its walls have pilasters supporting a richly-wrought cornice. The roof has fallen, but in other respects the temple is perfect.

On the eastern front, near the north-eastern angle, is a

Greek inscription in large characters. It is oddly cut on the smooth wall, without any tablet, so that one is inclined to suspect it was inscribed at a date posterior to that of the building.

It tells us the temple was erected in the year 557 (A.D. 246), during the reign of the *two Philips*. The date is of importance, as tending to establish the fact that it was the era of the *Seleucida*, and not that of *Alexander*, which was in former times generally used in Syria.

When we were about to mount and return to Damascus, the sheikh, seeing the interest we appeared to take in this ruin, informed us that half an hour east of the village the remains of a city lie upon the plain; and though we had a long journey before us, we resolved to visit them. Accompanied by the sheikh on his fine mare, we set out at a rapid pace. After leaving the village we noticed along the sides of the road several sarcophagi, and many sepulchral caves excavated in the chalky rock of the plain. We also passed three subterranean aqueducts, which bring down copious streams from the mountains on the left. The third has a strongly-built reservoir, and immediately below it, two miles from Maksûra, commence the ruins of the old city. Heaps of hewn stones lie strewn over the plain, mixed with broken shafts and moulded cornices. On the eastern side of them are the foundations of a strong fortress, measuring about 300 yards square. There were two gates, one on the north and the other on the south, flanked by heavy towers. In the interior some large buildings once stood, but the whole is so ruined that we could form no correct idea of their character. I galloped from ruin to ruin during my short stay, in the hope of discovering an inscription; but in vain. We were informed that in the mountain-side, a short distance beyond the ruins, is a *divan*, or "theatre," and another fountain. We had no time to visit them, and were reluctantly compelled to turn away after a brief and unsatisfactory examination.

We galloped back to Maksûra along the banks of an ancient canal. The sheikh pressed us to remain with him

during the night, and, on our refusing, said we must not leave the village without partaking of his hospitality, and thus honouring him in some way. This we could not well refuse after the kindness he had shown us; we consequently partook of a hearty lunch. Mounting at 3.10, we started for Damascus. On leaving the village we met a small party of Arabs, the chiefs of a tribe of the Anezy now encamped beside the lakes, who had come here to negotiate for wheat and barley. It was past nine o'clock when we knocked at Bab Tûma, and later still ere we reached our own houses in Damascus.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLAIN AND LAKES OF DAMASCUS.

Druze war — Scenery of the plain — "Harrân of the Columns" — Mouth of the Abana — The character and extent of the South and East lakes — A battle-field — Singular ruins — Adventure in the marshes — Tell es-Salahtyeh, an Assyrian mound — The lake Hîjâneh and mouth of the Pharpar — The Sâfâh.

DURING the summer of 1852 the Druzes of the Haurân refused to give conscripts, and the commander-in-chief was ordered to march against them with all his available forces. Having been worsted in several severe skirmishes, he withdrew his troops ere winter set in, leaving strong outposts to guard the plain of Damascus against the rebels. While hostilities continued, travelling in the eastern and southern divisions of the plain was not safe; now, however, the campaign having terminated, an excursion might be made with comparative safety. The *lakes* I had never visited, and the lower parts of the Barada and 'Awaj remained unexplored. I had often projected an excursion into this *terra incognita*, but more important labours had hitherto prevented me. A short interval of leisure occurring, and opportunity offering, I got together a strong party, secured an intelligent guide, and made all necessary arrangements for a tour to the lakes.

November 17th.—We assembled at an early hour. The party consisted, in addition to Messrs. Robson and Barnett, my companions on the last journey, of the Rev. G. Lansing, and M. Antôn Bulâd, a learned Greek monk. We had two servants and a guide, well mounted and armed. The air was fresh and frosty, and the wind blew keenly in our faces as we rode along the banks of the Akrabâny, one of the

canals from the Barada. Ere long the rising sun dissolved the hoar-frost and lighted up the distant hills. A cloud rested on Hermon, and the sound of thunder was heard; we therefore feared some approaching change. As the day advanced, however, every cloud disappeared, and every hill and mountain stood out in bold relief from the clear blue sky. It was a glorious day! But why speak of the weather in the East? Amid the clouds and gloom of England, the mists of Scotland, and the showers of the Emerald Isle, the weather may form a topic of conversation, and a glorious November day would indeed be rare; but in Syria, where for six long months of each year the deep azure of the heavens is scarcely shaded by a passing cloud, why speak of a glorious day? Yet it *was* glorious, even for Syria. The atmosphere was transparent as crystal; a shower had dispelled the haze that gathers over the plain during the summer heats; and the magic influence of the mirage did not convert parched soil into placid lakes; Nature, in fact, appeared fresh and clear and beautiful.

We followed the eastern road for some distance, and then, turning to the right, passed between the villages of Melîha and Balât, skirting the side of the latter, in which we observed fragments of columns and sarcophagi. Our road lay along the bank of a stream, which we crossed by a substantial bridge, and entered Nôleh.

The orchards and forest-gardens of Damascus extend to Nôleh, and we had hitherto ridden beneath the shade of the walnut, apricot, or olive; but there was now before us an open plain, perfectly level. The villages that stud its surface have each its little grove of fruit-trees and poplars, but the intervals are without tree or shrub. Passing Nôleh we found the plain well cultivated for some distance; then large patches of waste land began to appear, and became more frequent and extensive as we advanced. On our left, at the distance of two miles and a half, was the Barada meandering eastward across the flat expanse. Numerous villages stand on its banks, and the plain near it has a richer and fresher aspect at this season, owing to the abun-

dant supply of water. After a fast ride of three hours forty-three minutes, we entered Harrân el-'Awamîd.

"Harrân of the Columns" receives its name from three Ionic columns which stand in the centre of the village. There is no building connected with them, nor are the traces of any visible. In the streets and lanes I observed broken shafts and hewn stones, showing that some important structures once stood here.

From the terraced roofs of the houses that cluster round the pillars I got an extensive view; and here, again, my attention was called to three ruined buildings called *Diûra*, which I had first seen on my visit to Maksûra. One of them especially seemed large and lofty, and the villagers spoke in glowing terms of its extent and beauty. All, however, refused to accompany us when we proposed a visit to them, and assured us that a hundred horsemen dare not attempt the journey. We heard this with sorrow; but we still hoped for more cheerful intelligence in some other village. A short distance east of Harrân we saw extensive marshes covered with forests of reeds, intermixed with spaces of clear water. This is a portion of the *Bahret el-Kibîyyeh*, or "South Lake."

Soon after the narrative of my first visit to Harrân was published, Dr. Beke called attention to it, believing it to be identical with Haran of Mesopotamia, the scene of the romantic story of Jacob and Laban. He argues that the "two rivers" referred to are the Abana and Pharpar, and that the district lying between them is the true Mesopotamia (*Aram-Naharaim*) of the Bible. He has since visited Harrân, and travelled in the supposed route of Jacob to Gilead. He has developed his theory with much learning and force, but he has not succeeded in convincing Biblical geographers of its soundness. The narrative of Jacob's journey is not devoid of difficulty, but in my view there is nothing in it to warrant us in disturbing the ancient traditional site of Haran.

We left Harrân at 11.40, and rode to 'Ataibeh, the marshes being close on our right the whole way. In twenty-five

minutes we forded the principal channel of the Barada, near the spot where it flows into a large expanse of clear water in the marsh. The river was 30 feet wide by about 4 feet deep; but the current was sluggish. Two points of some importance were now established; namely, *first*, that the *Barada continues to flow during the whole summer* into the lake. The present season had been unusually dry, no rain having fallen since April, except a slight shower, which could not affect the river, and there having been little snow during the previous winter; and yet, notwithstanding these unfavourable circumstances, here was still a deep and wide stream. *Second*, we had ocular demonstration *that the waters in the lake do not dry up during the summer*. There is not, it is true, a large expanse of clear water, and the reeds conceal a part of what does exist; yet there is some, and there are marshes of great extent.

In half an hour more we forded a second branch of the Barada, not much inferior in size to the first, and, like it, flowing into an open sheet of water, which almost encompasses 'Ataibeh. After a short stay in this village we remounted, and proceeded eastward to examine the extent and boundaries of the lakes. Our course lay nearly S.E. along the border of the South Lake. In half an hour we reached a deep and wide channel, through which in winter and spring the surplus waters of the South Lake flow northward into another. We rode on at a smart pace for a quarter of an hour over undulating and elevated ground, and then ascended a mound covered with graves, called *Tell Maktel Mûsa*—the "Tell where Moses was slain." We could hear of no tradition attached to the spot; but the situation corresponds to the place called by Abulfeda *Merj Râhet*, where a battle was fought (A.H. 64) between the Yemeniyeh and Kaistiyeh. The field of battle he describes as in the Ghûtah of Damascus, toward the E. The position, the tombs, and the name, suggest that this may be the spot referred to by the historian. The battle was one of the fiercest that took place between the rival factions of the Muslims in the early days of Islam. Merwân was the

khâlif elect of the house of Omeiyah, and the Yemeniyeh, with Hassan at their head, embraced his cause; while Abdullah, his rival, was powerfully aided by the famous *Dehak* the son of *Kais*, whose party was called Kaistiyeh. The battle sealed the fate of Abdullah, for Dehak himself, and eighty of the nobles of Syria, were slain; and Merwân was established on the throne of the khâlifs.

From this mound I was able to see the form and extent of the South Lake. From numerous observations made at this and other places, I found that its length is about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles and its breadth $5\frac{1}{2}$.

We now turned northward and rode across the plain among groves of tamarisk to survey the East Lake. In ten minutes we passed another tell covered with Arab graves. The sons of the desert rest here in solitude after a life of wandering—the daring marauder and the brave warrior side by side in the silent tomb. We rode over their graves in peace, for death had paralysed the strong arm and quenched the fierce spirit. In fifteen minutes more we were standing on a rising ground on the side of the East Lake, now presenting a vast expanse of waving canes, with clear spots of water here and there. I estimated its extent as follows:—length $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles, breadth 4 miles, circumference 20 miles. Its borders are less clearly defined than those of the other, owing to the marshes extending for some distance along the banks of the streams that fall into it. The distance between the two lakes averages more than a mile, and the elevation of the ground is such that they can never unite.

After a careful examination of the district, we rode along the side of the marshes for some distance in a north-western direction, and then turned into them by a winding path through the thicket of reeds. In fifteen minutes we reached *Tell el-Khanzîr*, the “Hill of the Swine,” at the side of which is some deep water. Leaving my horse, I followed a village guide in among the reeds, through which we had difficulty in forcing our way. They are from 12 to 15 feet high. I was anxious to see wild swine, but, though

we found places where they had been recently wallowing, and could even hear them as they forced their way through the jungle in the distance, I was not so fortunate as to get sight of any. As we crouched down in a favourable spot waiting their approach, and listening to their hoarse growl, the guide told me in whispers that during the previous year he had missed the path and lost his way near this spot, and was three days and three nights among the marshes. On hearing his story, I proposed to return to my companions, as I had no wish for an adventure in such a locality, even with the prospect of enjoying the society of wild boars. We got back in safety, and, mounting our horses, set out for 'Ataibeh, which we reached as the sun was going down behind Hermon.

We had now solved the mystery of the lakes into which the waters of the *Abana* flow, and had made observations which will henceforth effect a complete transformation in the maps of this region. Instead of one lake, which has hitherto been delineated by cartographers, there are, in reality, two lakes of considerable extent, and the Barada, forming a kind of delta with its branches, pours into them the only supply of water they receive from the mountains.

The Barada flows in a winding course due eastward across the plain. Its banks are lined with groves of fruit-trees and ranges of poplars as far as *Tell es-Salahiyeh*, about $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the city. The scenery along it is rich, and in places picturesque. The long branches of the willow and the giant arms of the walnut often meet across the river, reminding one of those quiet nooks so often seen on the trout-streams of England. *Tell es-Salahiyeh* is one of the most interesting spots in the plain. It is an artificial mound of an oval form, about 300 yards in diameter and 100 feet in height. The surface is covered with loose earth, composed mainly of brickdust and fragments of broken pottery. On the southern side, next the bank of the river, a portion of the mound has been cut away, and here are exposed regular layers of sun-burnt brick, of which the mound appears to have been constructed. On the western side,

near the village, I found, on my first visit, a limestone slab, about 5 feet long by 3 wide, containing a bas-relief representing an Assyrian priest. The workmanship is rude and the stone has been defaced; but it was sufficiently plain to show the costume and attitude of the figure. I sketched it roughly at the time, intending on some future occasion either to obtain a cast or the stone itself; but it disappeared ere my return.

The slab has since been found, and is now in the British Museum. Some excavations have of late been made in the



mound, with a view to the discovery of Assyrian relics; but, so far as I have been able to ascertain, not with sufficient skill or thoroughness to insure success.

Our servants, who had remained in the village, had in the mean time arranged our quarters for the night in the house of the sheikh, and we found a sumptuous dinner laid out. M. Bulâd produced an ample store of Damascus delicacies, with a bottle of excellent wine. The labour of the day had prepared us for doing justice to even less inviting dainties. A number of the villagers had gathered in, and were

squatting round the walls, watching our every movement and wondering at the facility with which we introduced "the little spears" (forks) into our mouths, and whispering what fools the Franks were to endanger their faces with such weapons, while they have fingers like other men. The whole of our proceedings were a mystery to the spectators, and many a nudge did they give each other as some new feat was performed with the knife and fork; but their wonder only found audible expression in an occasional *wullah!*

While thus occupied, we opened negotiations about our proposed journey to the Diûra. Our Damascus guide, we soon found, was strongly opposed to proceeding farther E. If fear of danger was the reason, he ought to have been the last to decline, for in the variety and number of his weapons he resembled a portable armoury. We tried our own powers of persuasion, holding forth strong inducements to any five men who would accompany us. It was in vain. Druzes, Arabs, robbers of all kinds and sects, were now, it was said, prowling along the borders of the desert, waiting a favourable opportunity to plunder. Our friend the monk was as eager as any of us, but the people were obstinate, and utterly refused to go. In fact, it is well known that these border villages which have the lakes and marshes as a defence against the Bedawîn are almost constantly at war with them, and the people are consequently afraid to venture beyond the bounds of their own territory. We were compelled to give up our project for the present, and to confine our investigations to the lakes.

During the course of the evening a party of Turkish cavalry arrived in the village, and attempted by force to get possession of the court-yard where our horses were picketed, and of the whole house we occupied. We sent one of our servants with a peremptory order for the soldiers to go elsewhere, and to inform them that Englishmen had for the time hired the house, and would prevent the Pasha himself from entering it. A word from us was of more weight with the unruly soldiers than the remonstrances and efforts of the

poor villagers. Our host was delighted at this deliverance, and assured us our presence had saved him from imposition, and perhaps from personal abuse. So it is in this unhappy land. Franks are hailed as protectors wherever they go, and are cordially welcomed to almost every house, because it is known they have some sense of justice, and pay for what they get ; but Government officials are shunned and feared. In fact, Turkish officials, from pashas to the lowest grade of police, are looked on as robbers. The people would much rather remain idle than work for the Government ; for when they are compelled to labour, their animals are abused, they themselves beaten if they complain, and they either get no pay at all, or receive a miserable pittance, about one-fourth of what they could gain elsewhere.

November 18th.—We returned this morning to the village of Harrân, and continued our journey to Kefrein, fifteen minutes farther. Here we turned to the left towards Judeideh. I left my companions to pursue the direct road, and, putting spurs to my horse, followed as closely as possible the indented border of the marshes, so as to note particularly the amount of water and the extent of the lake. I found water at every point, but generally concealed beneath the rank grass and reeds. The numbers of wild-fowl were almost beyond conception. They rose in clouds before me, and, sweeping round for a few minutes, settled down again at a little distance. Geese, ducks, storks, herons, and water-fowl in endless variety, appeared on every side. At 9.30 we reached Judeideh.

As we left the village our road led up a gentle elevation in the plain, which extends eastward as far as we could see. It is considerably higher than the village, and prevents the extension of the lake and marshes southward. The soil is rich, though now in a great measure uncultivated. The tamarisk grows luxuriantly, and likewise large quantities of the plant called *Kily* (*Salsosa fruticosa*), whose ashes are used in the manufacture of soap.

In fifty-three minutes we reached Hijâneh. Beside it is a large mound covered with ancient ruins. We rode to the

summit, taking with us an intelligent native to tell us the names of the places in view. On the N. and N.E. is seen the Ghûtah, with its orchards; the Merj, teeming with villages; then the flat surface of the lakes covered with canes, and the undulating ground beyond rising with a gentle slope to the Tellûl. The range of hills so often referred to, called Tellûl, is seen very clearly. Both on the N. and S. of these hills the plain extends to the horizon. From the southern extremity of the Tellûl to Jebel Haurân there is a continuous plain: only one solitary blue peak, rising up in the far distance, breaks the uniformity; and this peak, our guide informed me, is in the centre of the *Safâh*. On the S. of Tell Hĭjâneh a plain extends to the base of Jebel Haurân. On the S.W. lay the Lejâh, ten miles distant; and in the midst of it rose a conical peak, which I afterwards identified as Tell Amâra. More to the W. the view is shut in by the heights of Mâni'a.

Lake Hĭjâneh lies on the S. and S.E. of Tell Hĭjâneh. It is upwards of 5 miles long by about $4\frac{1}{2}$ broad. It was entirely dry at the time of our visit; but the forests of reeds and the dark colour of the soil marked the boundaries of the water during winter and spring. One of my companions had before visited this spot in the month of June, and found a large expanse of water. We were informed that it very rarely dries up completely. The river 'Awaj enters it on the N.W., about twenty minutes below where we stood. I could trace its winding course over the plain, from the spot where it issues from between the ranges of Mâni'a and Aswad. Its bed was now quite dry nearly to that point. A winter torrent called Liwa, whose source is in Jebel Haurân, falls into the lake at its southern extremity; but it only flows while the snow is melting in the mountains, or heavy rain falling.

About half an hour S. of Tell Hĭjâneh is a mound, covered with ancient ruins, called *Kasrein*, "the two Castles;" and beyond the lake is another much larger mound, called Mastâbeh, also crowned with ruins. There are likewise some ruins on a rising ground in the centre of

the lake. We did not visit any of them—the more distant ones through fear of the Arabs, whose flocks we saw on the plain, and those near us we did not consider sufficiently important.

I had now completed my survey of the eastern part of the plain of Damascus, and of the border-land from Palmyra to *Bashan*. From observations made during my excursions, that section of the map accompanying this work has been *exclusively* constructed. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the importance of my researches, there can be no question that the geographical information I present to the public is new. In Burckhardt's 'Travels in Syria' there are a few brief notes on the topography of this region, but they are vague and incorrect. It is there stated that at the end of the Ghûtah or Merj of Damascus begins Jebel Haurân, the northern part of which is called Safâh; and, I presume, from this information Berghaus has delineated the Safâh upon his map. From the termination of the plain of Damascus to the commencement of Jebel Haurân extends a level plain. I have carefully examined it both from Tell Hîjâneh and Jebel Haurân, and I have travelled along it; I can therefore affirm that the Safâh is not located there. The guide whom we employed at Hîjâneh informed us that he had on several occasions accompanied the Arabs to the Safâh; and, pointing to the blue peak on the horizon, he said that peak was in the midst of it. The peak is a journey of *a day and a half* from Hîjâneh, and at least *twelve hours* N.E. of Jebel Haurân. He stated besides that the Safâh is like the Lejah, only more difficult of access. There are no hills around it, but there are jagged rocks, the passes through which are only known to those who frequent it. There are no springs in it, and the small quantity of rain that falls during the winter is not sufficient to provide a store for summer use. In the plain, a short distance from its eastern border, are fountains much frequented by the Arabs. All these particulars were confirmed by subsequent inquiries made during my visit to the Haurân. During last summer (1854) I had an opportunity of conversing with

the great Bedawy sheikh, Mohammed ed-Dhûhy, whose powerful tribe roams over these regions. I inquired about the Safâh. "Ya Beg!" he exclaimed. "Wullah! It is an accursed place, and its people are an accursed people. They steal and plunder, and there is little hope of reprisals, for they live among rocks that no Bedawy can penetrate. Three years ago, Ya Beg! I went with my people to revenge many acts of aggression and bloodshed, but they would not come out to the plain; and when we attempted to go in, they shot us and speared us among the defiles, where we were helpless. My two brothers and my uncle were killed at my side, and eighty of my people shared their fate. I, too, did not escape: a spear pierced my shoulder, and a gunshot broke my arm; and now look at this!" He held up his right hand, withered and powerless.

My survey of the interesting country E. of Damascus and Bashan being incomplete, I planned an excursion to the Safâh and plain of Moab, but was prevented from carrying it out. During the summer of 1867, Cyril C. Graham, Esq., passed some weeks beside me on the heights of Antilebanon. We talked much of those untrodden regions dimly seen on the eastern horizon, and of the ruins that were said to exist there. The excursion I had projected, Mr. Graham undertook and accomplished, with a courage and success never surpassed since the days of Burckhardt. Starting from the northern end of Jebel Haurân, he traversed the plain of Harrah, and reached the southern end by the Safâh after a twenty-seven hours' march. He describes this remarkable region as still wilder than the Lejah, with a line of basalt tells running through it from N. to S. Along its eastern border are traces of an ancient road, and several ruined towns, whose architecture is the same as in the cities of Bashan. On the rocks and stones he found great numbers of inscriptions resembling the Sinaitic.

From the Safâh Mr. Graham travelled S.E. across an arid desert. After several hours' march he reached a spot where the stones were covered with inscriptions;—"I

copied," he says, "a great number of them, both here and in many places afterwards. It appears that all over the Harrah there are places where hosts of stones are written upon, and frequently where no traces of ruins remain." The inscriptions are generally accompanied, as in the Sinaitic peninsula, with rude figures of camels, deer, asses, horsemen, &c. The language appears to be Himyaritic, and the inscriptions may therefore be ascribed to the Himyarites, who, in former ages, occupied a large section of Arabia.

Mr. Graham's visit was necessarily hurried. He had little time for minute examination. An inviting field is thus left for future explorers. Herr Wetstein, formerly Prussian consul at Damascus, travelled over part of Haurân and the country eastward since Mr. Graham's visit. He has given the results in a little work published in Germany; but the careful reader will see that, while he studiously ignores the labours of his immediate predecessors, he adds little, if anything, to the information gleaned by them.

Returning to the village of Hîjâneh we took a hasty lunch in the house of our guide, and set out for the city. Our road led for some time westward, bringing us close to the bed of the 'Awaj, and then turned N.W., running parallel to the river. The plain is rich, and in places cultivated. Passing Ghuzlanîyeh and Karahta, where I observed some ancient remains, we ascended Tell Abu Yazîd. From hence we had a fine view of the plain, and of the valley of the Pharpar E. of Jebel el-Aswad. Below us, half an hour distant, near the bank of the river, is the village of Nejha, standing like a ruined fortress on a rocky mound. A few battalions of regular soldiers, and some troops of irregular cavalry, were here encamped to check the incursions of the rebel Druzes. Little parties were scattered round the tents engaged in the exciting exercise of the *jerid*, and displaying, by their graceful evolutions, not less the speed, docility, and training of the noble animals they rode than their own dexterity in managing them. But the steady discipline of the regular soldiers, and the evolutions of the

Kurdish light horse, were not always sufficient to resist the impetuous attacks of the Druzes. Once and again were villages plundered, and to the very gates of the city the daring rebels penetrated. Often have I heard the booming of cannon and the dropping fire of musketry during the stillness of the night, when every other sound was hushed. This is past now, and the Turkish armies are engaged in more honourable warfare. Still, except a new line of policy is adopted in the government of Syria, fresh rebellions may be anticipated.

On the summit of this tell is a wely, sacred to the memory of Abu Yazîd el-Bistâny, now a place of pilgrimage for the people of the surrounding country. The summit appears to have been at one time fortified; a deep moat encompasses it, and within it are large quantities of hewn stones.

In one hour and twenty-five minutes we reached 'Akrâba, and in three-quarters of an hour more entered the East Gate of Damascus.

CHAPTER X.

JOURNEY ALONG THE BORDERS OF THE DESERT
TO BASHAN.

Difficulties — Druze war — Turkish legislation — A caravan — Mirage — The valley of the 'Awaj, PHARPAR — Scenery of the desert — A night march and adventure — Deserted town of Burâk — Remarkable stone houses — Tale of border warfare — Scenery of the Lejah — Moonlight ride — Ruined and deserted towns — Roman road — Jebel Haurân — Kingdom of BASHAN — Druze hospitality — Ancient houses and inscriptions in Hiyât — A Druze chief — A banquet — Illustrations of Scripture.

FROM the time of my first arrival in Damascus, I felt an intense desire to visit the ancient kingdom of Bashan. I had heard so much of its wild scenery, its strange ruins, and deserted cities, that I resolved, at some time or other, to explore the country. The difficulties that presented themselves, and the dangers that seemed to threaten any intrusion into that mysterious region, only made me all the more eager and determined. Three years elapsed before an opportunity offered. The breaking out of the Druze war, in the autumn of 1852, seemed to take away all hope for a lengthened period; but the defeat of the Turkish forces, and the wish of the Sultan for peace at any price, opened up my way. Mr. Wood, the British consul, at the request of the Government, acted the part of mediator with his wonted skill, and with complete success. His influence with the Druzes, already very great, was thereby largely increased. Towards the close of January, 1853, he informed me a tour in Bashan was practicable, and he kindly furnished me with letters of recommendation to the leading Druze chiefs. Having made all necessary preparations, I set out on

the 31st of January, taking advantage of a caravan which was returning from Damascus to Jebel Haurân. My companions were the Rev. James Barnett and Mr. Quaill, an American traveller; and we had with us Nikôla, a dragoon, and Ibrahîm and Hâtem, servants. We travelled without tents or baggage of any kind; but we were well armed; for though we expected a hearty welcome from the Druzes, we had some reason to fear Muslem fanaticism, and we knew besides that the late war had filled the country with marauders against whom the only security would be ability to repel aggression.

We left the gate of the city at half-past ten o'clock, and rode along the plain in a south-easterly direction, amid droves of camels. On each side of the road are extensive olive plantations, with fields of wheat and barley. After proceeding about a mile, the plain upon our right became open—not a tree or fence to break the view, but one continuous green carpet for miles. The village of Baweidah, farther to the E., surrounded by its gardens, appeared like an island in a sea of verdure.

In twenty-five minutes we passed Yelda, close upon the left, containing a few ruins, consisting of foundations of hewn stone and Corinthian columns of basalt; but like many ruins in this land, there is no record of its history. In half an hour more we reached Kabr es-Sit, a populous village, and a place of great sanctity, as it contains the tomb of Zeinab, the granddaughter of Mohammed, and the wife of 'Omar Ibn el-Khattâb, the second Khalif. Zeinab died, and was buried in this village, which is therefore called Kabr es-Sit, "the tomb of the lady." A mosque, with a cupola and minaret, stands over the sacred spot; and during the season when the Persian pilgrims are going to and returning from the Haj, great numbers of them visit it. At this place we had expected the caravan to form in order; but we observed each company as it came up passing on. We dismounted to await the arrival of Aiyûb, our guide, and his camels. Observing a respectably dressed Muslem, accompanied by a Bedawy in the Ageil costume, standing near us, I inquired if

he were going to the Haurân, and for what object, as it seemed strange an inhabitant of the city should visit that district in such unsettled times. He replied that he was going to purchase wheat. The Arab, I found, was from Palmyra. He informed me with manifest sorrow that his native village was fast going to ruin. The increasing exactions of the Bedawîn, and intestine feuds, are yearly diminishing the number of its inhabitants. Only a short time previously, he stated, nearly a third of the villagers had left their homes and settled a day's journey farther E.

Aiyûb having arrived, and having provided a supply of barley for our horses, we mounted at twelve o'clock. Eastward from Kabr es-Sit the plain is destitute of trees, and only a small part of it cultivated. A beautiful mirage now relieved the monotony. The whole expanse seemed a vast lake, and along the base of Jebel el-Aswad was a clearly defined shore-line; while Tell Abu Yazîd on our left appeared as an island. The camels a short distance in front seemed to be wading through shallow water, and their shadows were mirrored in its glassy surface. On advancing a little farther I was astonished to observe the camp of the Turkish army occupying the same spot where I had seen it from Tell Abu Yazîd three months before. I had understood that the soldiers had been removed to Damascus at the commencement of the rainy season; but we saw the camp now, and were engaged in discussing the subject when a swell in the plain shut it out from view. On ascending the rising ground we looked again for it, but it was nowhere to be seen: we examined if any unevenness of the ground could still hide it; but no, it had vanished! The whole was an optical illusion, strange as it was beautiful.

We skirted the eastern base of Jebel el-Aswad. The ground along the base of the range is strewn with boulders of basalt, and the rock crops up in many places. The junction of the limestone and basalt in the plain is marked by a line drawn from Darâya to Harrân el-'Awamîd, running nearly E. and W. The whole region westward and northward of this line is cretaceous limestone, abounding in

fossils; while the district southward and eastward, as far as I have travelled, is an unbroken field of trap.

Turning round the eastern extremity of the hills we came in sight of Nejha. A few minutes more brought us to the village, situated on a rocky mound. It bears no resemblance to the villages in the plain, being constructed of black stones instead of sun-dried bricks. The situation is fine: a rich plain, watered by the Pharpar, extends away to the E., but the absence of trees, orchards, and gardens shows that it is on the outskirts of civilization. It is the last inhabited village in this direction.

We remained in the village some time examining the features of the country, and looking at the caravan, as group after group of camels passed by, swept across the plain, and contributed to swell the motley throng beyond the river. A cold wind, accompanied by a drizzling rain, began to blow in our faces; so, wrapping our cloaks around us, and mounting our impatient horses, we descended, and galloped across the meadow land to the river-side. The 'Awaj is here spanned by an ancient and substantial stone bridge. After crossing it we reined up our horses in the midst of the caravan, now numbering several hundred camels. A scene of confusion presented itself to our eyes, and a Babel of wild and discordant sounds fell upon our ears. Camels, broken loose from their drivers, ran about, threatening to overturn everything in their course. Others, pinioned to the ground by the feet of the Arabs, growled with open mouths, as their loads were shifted or bound. The men, with shouts as loud and scarcely less deep, ran hither and thither to secure their animals and assist their companions; while some, with wild gestures, disputed about the proper mode of packing and securing their goods. All stragglers fell into the ranks, and a few that had tarried were seen urging their animals onward with increased speed. At this place the march commenced, and order must henceforth be kept—the safety of all, we were informed, depended upon this. We had entered the domains of the Bedawin, who acknowledge no right but might. Our farther progress was

liable to be disputed at any moment, and, consequently, every man examined his weapons and prepared for action. The attacks of the Bedawîn, when made, are sudden and impetuous; and resistance, if effectual, must be prompt and decided. During the winter season this route is, in general, pretty secure, as the Arab tribes are far distant on the banks of the Euphrates; but the late war had drawn these daring marauders from their accustomed haunts, and they endured rain and cold in the hope of plunder. It was far from certain, therefore, whether our course would not be intercepted; but, whatever might occur, we had sufficient confidence in the strength of our caravan.

After half an hour spent in arranging the loads and the order, the word was given, and the caravan proceeded in a long column generally three deep. My horse becoming impatient, I rode to the front, where I was joined by my companions and by a Christian called Mûsa, who appeared to take the lead. Mûsa was an old acquaintance, and he seemed no little astonished to find me here. He is son of the priest of Hît, and is the chief physician in Jebel Haurân; he is, consequently, held in high estimation, and has considerable authority. When I first saw him in Damascus I was struck with his fair complexion, ruddy cheeks, and flowing auburn beard; and now, with his bright kefiyeh and smiling countenance, his appearance was still more striking, and presented a marked contrast to his dark and wild-looking companions. He rode a white mare of good blood, and, from his dress and equipments, was evidently a man of position and consequence.

We left the river at 1.50, and our road led nearly due S. over a fertile but uncultivated plain. At 2.10, seeing a ruin on the top of a tell half a mile on the left, we galloped to it, and discovered the remains of a comparatively modern village. Half a mile beyond it we crossed the dry bed of an ancient canal, which was apparently intended for the irrigation of this fine plain.

The plain becomes more stony and the soil lighter towards the base of the low spur that runs out eastward from Mânî'a.

At 2.45 we began the ascent of a rocky slope, and the path was almost blocked up by huge fragments of basalt. In a quarter of an hour we reached a plateau on the top of the declivity, and here Mûsa ordered a halt. It appeared that a Druze with some camels, the property of Sheikh Ass'ad of Hît, could nowhere be found, and fears were entertained that, if left behind, he might be attacked and murdered by the Kurds, or plundered by the Arabs; and the Christians, of whom the caravan was chiefly composed, would be called to account for deserting him. It was a bleak and dreary spot. Not a house, nor a tree, nor a living creature was within the range of vision; round us was a plain, covered with fragments of porous lava, here and there thrown into heaps, but whether by the hand of man or by Nature seemed doubtful. On the W. a valley ran up into the centre of Jebel Mânî'a, but its sides had a uniform slope, and the bare rounded summits above were featureless. The only evidence of the presence of man was a ridge of stones, the remains of an ancient wall, which ran in a straight line westward across the plateau, up the side of the valley, and over the summit of the hills in the distance. Our view towards the E. was shut in by rising ground, but the wall extended in that direction as far as we could see. It was probably built to check sudden incursions of Arab horsemen into the vale behind us, thus serving the same purpose as the Roman wall across the northern counties of England.

After waiting twenty minutes, and ascertaining from a horseman who had galloped back that the Druze had not yet passed Nejha, we moved onward. The rain had now ceased, and, though it still continued cold, we entertained less gloomy anticipations of our night's march. We travelled nearly due S., descending a gentle but rugged and bleak slope, and in half an hour reached the side of a plain with a deep alluvial soil.

We had now left the hills. The principal ridge of Jebel Mânî'a terminates considerably to the right of this road; but the country for some distance to the S.E. is diversified

with low isolated ridges and conical tells. At 4.15 we passed the base of one of these tells, on the eastern side of which, near the summit, is a solitary terebinth-tree, a striking object in this naked region. There must be some peculiar sanctity attached to it, or it would not have escaped the axe of the Arabs. The tell is called *Abu Shejar*, "the father of the tree." After passing it the plain on the W. opened up, and I inquired for Merjâny; Aiyûb, who had joined us on his donkey, requested me to ride on with him and he would point it out. In twenty minutes we came in sight of the village, about an hour distant, situated at the foot of low hills. Beyond it rose Jebel Khiyârah, black and barren. On our left were some mounds, with patches of verdure on their sides and in the vales between them. At five o'clock we passed their western base, and here crossed the bed of a wady with water lying in pools; and on its southern side a little fountain. Near the fountain are a few Arab tombs, with rough headstones. Around this place, and among the green valleys on the left, are the hollow fireplaces and oblong level areas surrounded with rough stones which mark the favourite encampments of the Bedawîn. The spot is well chosen, and much frequented during the season. Water is close at hand, and from the heights above a commanding view is obtained of the more elevated portions of the plain northward, and of the broad expanse stretching to the borders of the Lejah.

After passing this fountain we entered a plain different in character from that we had left. The soil is deep and rich, the surface free from stones, and the whole presents the appearance of having, at no very remote period, been under cultivation. The borders of the Lejah in front were now clearly defined as a rocky shore, and we could distinguish several villages and towns among the rocks. Night closed around us, and, as dark clouds covered the heavens, we could not see objects even at the distance of a few yards. To us, strangers, the road, not very well defined at the best, was entirely undistinguishable. My horse had been restive all day, but when night came it was with difficulty I

could manage him. He always insisted upon leading, and was thus ever and anon going off the path, and getting entangled in the fissures of the soil, which the winter rains had not yet closed up. On compelling him to join my companions in the midst of the caravan, he dashed fiercely at one of the other horses, and he, rearing and wheeling round to avoid the onset, threw his rider. My fallen friend was detained some time searching for his saddle-bags, and, on attempting to remount, the saddle turned and his horse galloped off in the dark. Of all this I knew nothing till I heard the cries far behind, and the shouts of the camel-drivers as the free steed ran madly past them. We halted, and the horse, with the instinct of his race, waited for his master. Not long after this incident we came to rugged ground. A thick rain was falling, which, with the black clouds and the dark plain, obscured every object; but the stumbling and twisting of our horses were sufficient indications of the nature of the road. We had not proceeded far among the rocks when a halt was called, and a consultation held whether we should continue our march, or await the light of the moon. The latter being determined upon, Mûsa requested us to follow him. This, however, was no easy matter, as the camels had assembled in droves and long files, and these, with the natural barriers of rocks and fissures, made locomotion difficult. I thought of dismounting, but my horse had shown that his vision was sharper and his steps surer than my own; so I kept a firm seat, and followed as nearly as I could the *voice* of Mûsa. In eight or ten minutes I reached a spot where my horse came to a dead stand. I urged and spurred him, but in vain. At last I got down to examine the nature of the barrier, and found a line of squatting camels picketed in front. The voice of Mûsa in the mean time grew fainter until it was lost in the distance. It was now my time to shout Mûsa! Mûsa! And twenty others repeated the call from different places, but no Mûsa came. Aiyûb fortunately heard me, and came up. He said a house was ready, and he led us over heaps of stones and rocks till he

brought us to a low door, through which we passed into a spacious apartment.

The house, of which we took possession, seemed, internally at least, to have undergone little change from the time when its ancient master left it. The massive stone walls were unshaken; and the long slabs of black basalt that formed the ceiling lay as regularly, and fitted as closely, as when the workmen had completed their labour; the door hung in its place uninjured by the lapse of centuries. This would not seem so strange in a land of peace and civilization, where antiquities are preserved with religious care; but in this country, where all is ruinous, and on the borders of the



Interior of House in Burāk.

desert, where the more peaceful peasants have for years been driven away by the Bedawīn, to find a house, complete in all its parts, cannot but strike the traveller with astonishment. Its preservation is owing to its strength. It would require too much labour to overthrow it. The walls are upwards of 4 feet thick, built of large blocks of squared stones, put together without cement. The roof is formed of flags about 6 inches thick, 18 inches broad, and 12 feet long, carefully hewn, and closely jointed; their ends rest upon other stones which project about a foot beyond the wall, and are moulded to form a cornice. The door of the apartment we first entered was a slab 4 feet 6 inches high, 4 feet

wide, and 8 inches thick ; it opened upon pivots, projecting from the stone itself, and working in sockets in the lintel and threshold. It is on this account difficult to displace the door, and I have since seen hundreds of them in their places even when other parts of the building were masses of ruin. The first apartment we entered was 20 feet long and 12 wide, by about 10 high. From it a low door opened into another room of the same dimensions and character, and from this a larger door admitted to a third, to which there was a descent by stone stairs ; it was a hall, equal in breadth to the other two, and some 25 feet long by 20 high. A semi-circular arch spanned it lengthwise, supporting the stone



Stone Door.

roof. The door was so large that camels could pass in and out.

Such is a specimen of the houses of Burâk, the name of the town in which we now rested ; and such, too, is a fair specimen of the houses of Haurân. Many of them are still uninjured, but very many are heaps of ruins. Some of them are large, with spacious courts in the interior, into which the chambers open ; others are small and plain ; but *all* are *massive* and *simple* in plan, indicating high antiquity.

Owing to the darkness I was unable to ascertain, from personal observation, the extent of this town or the general character of its buildings ; but the men sitting around us were well acquainted with it, and they said its houses were

all of one kind, and that there were no public buildings of any extent or beauty. It is situated in the N.E. corner of the Lejah, and is encompassed by masses of rock, the paths among which are tortuous and almost impracticable for horses. I inquired of Mûsa and several others about Wady Liwa, and whether a stream now flowed through it. They said the wady is close to Burâk, running along the border of the rocks on the E.; and that no stream ever flows in it, except when the snow is melting in the mountains or heavy rain falling, and then it runs into Lake Hijâneh. An intelligent Druze, whom I afterwards met in the Haurân, and who knew its whole course, confirmed this intelligence; and on examining this section of the country afterwards from the northern brow of the Jebel Haurân with a telescope, I was able to trace the line of the wady.

Burckhardt visited Burâk in 1812, having crossed the plain by way of Deir 'Aly and Merjâny. His account corresponds with that given above. He copied two Greek inscriptions among the ruins; they are not, however, of any importance. One of them has a date apparently corresponding to B.C. 304.

The walls and floor of the chamber were so damp that we dreaded the effects of sleep, and determined to spend the night in conversation. The Arabs crowded in eager to hear exciting tales, and each ready to add his own story to the common stock. Mûsa was the principal speaker, and recited some wild incidents of Arab life and warfare, the scene of which was the plain we had crossed. This plain the tribe of Sab'a, with whom the people of Haurân are constantly at war, carefully watch during autumn, when the villagers convey their grain to Damascus, and, whenever a favourable opportunity offers, they plunder stragglers or caravans. Fierce battles sometimes take place when attacks are rashly made. One stirring incident, in which Mûsa himself bore a part, I shall relate, as a specimen of the tales that amused us while we sat in one of Bashan's ancient mansions, and as an illustration of the state of Syrian borderland.

About two years ago a caravan composed of Druzes and Christians left Damascus early in the morning and took the road by Nejha and the plain. A number of the Christians, with a few Druzes, deeming the road safe, and being lightly laden, proceeded in front of the main body. There were about 30 men and more than 100 camels, but only some six or seven of the company were armed with firelocks. They had passed Tell Abu Shejar, and were skirting the western base of the hills, when Mûsa, who rode in front, saw a horseman suddenly disappear behind a rising ground half a mile eastward. He called a halt, and a Druze volunteered to go to the summit of an adjoining tell, and ascertain whether any marauding party was in sight. He returned, and reported that the way was clear. Some now wished to await the arrival of the main body, but a majority laughed at the proposal, and they continued their march. Half an hour passed, and the most prudent and cautious were beginning to abate in watchfulness; but a cloud of dust, far to the eastward, marked the approach of the enemy. On it rolled across the plain. To form the camels into a closely-packed circle was the work of a few minutes; the leaders, to which the others were fastened by strong cords, being drawn towards the centre. The men took their stations in different parts of this living fortification. A body of Arab horsemen, numbering about seventy spears, approached. The Druzes of the caravan levelled their guns, and the marauders hesitated. As those in front drew up, a portly figure, distinguished from the rest by a scarlet cloak, burst from the cavalcade, and, calling on his men to follow, dashed onward. A young Druze fired the first shot, but without effect; another followed with surer aim, and the mare of the Arab chief, with a tremendous bound, rolled over dead upon the plain. Her rider jumped to his feet, and led his men to action. Shot after shot was sent among them by the Druzes and Christians as the Bedawin attempted to reach them with their spears. On every side efforts were made to penetrate the mass of camels, but the sullen animals only growled and stamped when pricked with the lances;

strongly bound together, they were forced to keep their places. Half an hour had already passed, and four of the Bedawîn lay upon the plain dead or dying. Their chief, mounted again on the mare of one of his fallen comrades, after galloping round the living rampart, wheeled, and, approaching, severed the halter of one of the camels by a stroke of his scimitar, and then seizing it spurred away, dragging the animal after him, while another and another followed, urged on by the spears and shouts of his followers. Camel after camel thus left its place, and the little band saw their living barricade fast moving away, and leaving them exposed to their enemies. Nerved by a sense of danger, Mûsa sprang forward, and with his sword cut the halter of one of the camels and succeeded in dragging it back. But quick as thought a Bedawî was upon him with his lance. Mûsa escaped by darting under the camel, and wounded at the same time by a blow of his sword the horse of his assailant. Other horsemen dashed to the spot, and Christians and Druzes ran forward. The conflict had reached a crisis; more than one had felt the point of the spears, and all began to think fortune had deserted them. Just then the caravan was seen approaching; and a little band of horsemen, whose white turbans showed them to be Druzes, came up at a gallop. The Bedawîn wheeled and fled. A volley was sent after them, but without effect. It was deemed prudent not to give chase, as only twenty horsemen could be mustered, and two mares captured by the Druzes were deemed sufficient recompense for the twenty-five camels that had been carried off.

During the recital of this incident I had lain down upon a heap of stones, and Mûsa had scarcely concluded when I fell asleep. In attempting to turn, some time afterwards, I rolled off the stones, and awoke. Finding my companions engaged in spreading their *lehâfs* in the inner room, which seemed less damp, I followed their example, and was going to sleep again when the voices of Mûsa and Aiyûb were heard, shouting "*Yullah! Yullah! Ya Beg!*" Jumping to our feet, we learned that the caravan was starting. Our toilet consisted in rubbing our eyes and straightening the

brims of our hats, which temporary use as nightcaps had deranged. We *pocketed* our breakfast while the servants were saddling the horses; and at half-past one o'clock mounted and followed the caravan.

February 1st.—The moon now shone brightly, and half revealed the features of Burák. Huge masses of rock rose among and around the ruins. In the intervals were pits and fissures, and the flat surfaces of rock were strewn with broken fragments of basalt. The path along which we rode was narrow and tortuous, and had been formed by the hand of man, for we observed deep cuttings in the rock. A few minutes after leaving the ruins we rode for some distance along an ancient aqueduct, constructed to conduct the winter stream into the cisterns of the town. For nearly an hour we continued winding slowly through a labyrinth of rocks.

Soon after emerging from the defiles, we crossed Wady Liwa, and rode along a plain in which were boulders of basalt and rock fields shooting out like spurs from the Lejah. Trees also appeared here and there, both on the E. side of the wady and among the rocks of the Lejah on the W. We had advanced far ahead of the caravan, and as both Mûsa and Aiyûb had disappeared, we felt uneasy at being left alone. We halted twenty minutes till the front ranks came up, and, on inquiring of them, we learned, to our surprise, that Mûsa was in front with another division. We spurred our horses to a gallop, and were soon alone in the midst of a wild region. The path became stony, and was not very clearly defined; deep gullies, filled with mud and water, occasionally made a slight *détour* necessary. On we sped, however, over plain and through defiles, trusting to our knowledge of the direction in which we ought to travel to guide us. At last the tinkling of bells was heard, and we overtook a company just as the dark walls of Sauwarah appeared on our right.

The ruins of Sauwarah are of considerable extent, and resemble those of Burák. Soon after passing them I observed large numbers of barricades built of loose stones.

This, I was informed, was the site of one of the encampments of Ibrahim Pasha during the war of 1839. Near this spot the Druzes issued from the defiles of the Lejah in force, and defeated the soldiers with great slaughter, following the fugitives across the plain nearly to Hijaneh. The country on our left was open and level, but the banks of the wady were rocky and irregular, while the Lejah beyond it presented the appearance of a broken rocky surface. Here, as elsewhere, it has an elevation above the plain of from 20 to 30 feet.

We now saw a bright light in front. Our companions at first thought it was a party of Arabs watching their flocks, but, on ascertaining that it lay beyond the bounds of the Lejah, they said no shepherds would venture to kindle a fire in such a place. Leaving the caravan, we set out at a gallop towards the fire. An hour's ride, during which we passed several ruined villages on the borders of the Lejah, brought us to the spot; and a wildly picturesque scene presented itself to our view. A party of our companions had assembled beside a cairn of stones, and had collected furze and brushwood sufficient to make a large fire. The fitful blaze revealed the dark countenances, piercing eyes, and gaudy robes of the Arabs, as they squatted around, or stood leaning on their guns, while the background was filled up with strings of camels, intermixed with horses picketed round rocks and among oak-trees. We were glad to distinguish in the group the beaming countenance of our friend Mûsa. The party mounted soon after our arrival, and we set out together.

The dangerous part of the route was already far behind, and each made the best of his way homeward. With the dawn the outline of Tell Khalediyeh appeared on the eastern horizon, and as the morning advanced we could distinguish the ruins that crown it. We also observed that the plain on our left showed signs of cultivation, and appeared to have been at one time divided into fields by stone fences. These commence on the eastern side of the Liwa, now a narrow ravine with precipitous rocky banks, and extend

over the plain as far as we could see. In the plain there is not a trace of habitation, but on the borders of the Lejah are towns and villages half ruinous and wholly deserted. These all present the same general features; the houses low, and the walls of great thickness and strength. In every village are several square towers from 30 to 40 feet high, resembling belfries.

At 6.15 we crossed the rocky bed of a winter torrent coming into the Liwa from the E. On our right, within the border of the Lejah, stands the village of Hadr, containing some substantial buildings; above it about twenty minutes is another village, and opposite the latter, on a mound on the E. bank of the wady, is a village of considerable size, but more ruinous than those within the rocks. Many other villages and towns were within sight, and appeared as if their houses were still standing. Since the morning light had enabled us to examine more minutely the features of the country, we had seen traces of a Roman road running in a straight line along the E. bank of the Liwa. In some places it is almost perfect; the pavement unbroken by the traffic and wear of centuries. It is most probably a continuation of that we saw at Burâk. On the S. bank of the wady above referred to, the road branches—one branch continuing along the side of the Lejah, and the other turning up the slopes to the left. We were now far in advance of the caravan, and of all our companions, and did not know which way to take: we were consequently compelled to halt. Galloping to the top of a tell, I had a fine view over the wilderness of rocks westward; and was astonished at the vast numbers of towns and villages within sight. The country around was at one time densely populated; every available spot along the sides of the wady, as well as the plain eastward and the mountain-sides above, bears the marks of careful cultivation. The surface of the soil is in some places very stony, but the stones have been collected in heaps, and many of them used in the erection of fences.

After twenty minutes' delay an old man rode up and

directed us in the road to Hiyât. We did not consider it necessary to wait for the caravan or our guide, especially as the rain was falling heavily, and a cold wind blowing in our faces. The road we were told to follow led up the easy slope, here bleak enough, without tree or shrub to diversify the scenery. The soil is extremely fertile; but as the basaltic rock occasionally crops up, and large boulders and broken fragments are scattered over the surface, the whole has a forbidding aspect. And there were no grand features. The mountain summits in front were concealed by clouds; while to the right and left no object was visible save the



Druze Ploughman with goad.

rounded peaks of Tells Sheihân and Khaledîyeh, rising over the white mist that enveloped their bases.

After ascending about three-quarters of an hour we observed the first signs of *modern* cultivation; and we also obtained our first view of the village of Hiyât upon the hill-side above us. On our left we saw several castle-like villages, some on the summits of tells and others at their bases. The signs of life and industry appeared in the fields on every side. Yokes of oxen were turning up the soil, with ploughs which are, no doubt, exact counterparts of

those used in the days of the patriarchs, and by the subjects of the giant *Og*, whose ancient kingdom we had now entered. The ploughman, too, still carries his goad—a weapon apparently better fitted for the hand of the soldier than the husbandman. It is usually of the “oak of Bashan,” upwards of 10 feet in length. At one end is an iron spear, at the other a piece of the same metal flattened. One can well understand how a warrior might use such a weapon with effect in the battle-field; and after seeing and handling it, I did not think it so very wonderful that Shamgar should have slain 600 men with an *ox-goad*.

At 8.30 we reached Hiyât, and rode to the sheikh's house, where we were received with great distinction. We announced ourselves as Englishmen, and this was sufficient to open to us the heart and home of the noble Druze. Our horses were taken and fed; the reception-room was refitted with clean mats and cushions from the harîm; a fire of charcoal was kindled upon the hearth. Coffee was produced, roasted, pounded, and presented with due formality. The conversation gradually turned upon the recent war, and the probability of its renewal. This was the very subject we wished to avoid until we had seen one of the principal sheikhs and presented our letters of introduction. Feigning anxiety about Mr. Quail and Nikôla, who had ridden on before us, and whom we had not yet seen, I left the apartment. The sheikh, hearing my questions, sent two or three men in search of them, who came back with the intelligence that they had passed on to Hît. I now expressed a desire to see the ruins; and a young Druze offered to act as guide. I accepted his offer gladly, anxious to avoid the questions of the sheikh, and no less anxious to commence an inspection of ruins so remarkable.

Hiyât is built on the hill-side, in the form of a quadrangle, and is less than a mile in circumference. The houses are constructed of roughly-hewn stones, uncemented, but closely jointed. They are massive and simple in plan, giving evidence of remote antiquity. The present inhabitants have selected the most convenient and comfortable chambers,

and in these have settled down almost without alteration or addition. The roofs are of stone, like those of Burâk, so also are the doors; but I observed in one or two places that the stone doors had been removed and wooden ones substituted. There is no structure in the village with any pretension to architectural beauty; but on the eastern side, near a large tank, are ruins with fragments of ornamented cornices and pediments: these are now so completely destroyed that it is impossible to ascertain even the plan of the original building.

I estimated that about one-half of the houses in this village remain perfect, or nearly so, and quite habitable; but not more than a fourth of these were occupied at the time of my visit.

On returning to the sheikh's house I found that our servants had arrived, and that a horseman had come from Sheikh Ass'ad of Hît, to conduct us to his residence, where our companion was comfortably installed. The attentions of our worthy host, and of the Druzes of the village, were now beyond all bounds. His house, he assured us a score of times, was illumined by the light of our countenances, and his village honoured by our presence. He refused to permit us to depart until the next day, and he would listen to no reasoning and no excuses. We began to fear that an excess of hospitality was going seriously to interfere with our time and researches; but the messenger of Ass'ad, seeing our perplexity, came to our rescue, and compromised the affair by proposing that we should breakfast with our host, and then proceed to Hît. Breakfast accordingly soon appeared, and we did full justice to the eggs, milk, and honey, with which we were liberally supplied.

On our way to Hît we visited a large house, which stands about 300 yards E. of Hiyât. In front was a paved court-yard, surrounded by a wall, with a gateway opposite the entrance door. The main door is choked up with heaps of fallen stones; but a side door, about 8 feet high and of proportional width, with folding doors of stone, opens into a spacious chamber. From this a winding

staircase leads to an open *divan*, supported in front by an arch, similar to those of the modern Damascus houses. This apartment commands a noble view over the country to Hermon. On each side of the *divan* are large apartments, with windows in front, upwards of 6 feet high, and having folding shutters of stone still in their places.

Leaving this interesting ruin, we rode up the hill-side, through grain-fields to Hīt, and were conducted to the house of Sheikh Ass'ad 'Amer, who received us with every demonstration of respect and welcome. We were ushered into the reception-room, a half-ruinous and dirty apartment, where a crowd of villagers and others were assembled. The stone roof was supported by antique columns, and in the centre of the floor was a square hearth sunk 6 inches below the pavement. Here blazed and crackled an immense fire of charcoal. There was no chimney, but in the midst of the blazing mass was a huge bar of iron, intended to prevent any deleterious effects from the fumes of the charcoal. Round the hearth stood a formidable array of pots and boilers of various sizes, and they had the appearance of having been much used and seldom washed. Whether the internal parts were cleaner than the external I had no means of judging, as coffee, when prepared in the Arab style, has the valuable property of hiding all extraneous matter. It is an undeniable fact, however, that this beverage, as manufactured by the Arabs, is not only palatable, but refreshing and delicious. Beside the hearth lay a small circular shovel, with a long iron handle, curiously ornamented, while attached to the top of it by a brass chain was an iron spoon. This is the coffee-roaster. Opposite stood the mortar, of black oak, carved with quaint devices and figures, and beside it was the pestle, about 2 feet long, also carved like an Indian war-club. I had never before seen such a complete coffee service.

I presented our letter of introduction, and the sheikh, after reading it and seeing coffee properly served, left the room. In about half an hour he returned, and invited us to another apartment in the *harīm*, which had been pre-

pared specially for ourselves. Here we found comforts such as we had not anticipated. The floor and divans of the spacious apartment were covered with Persian carpets, cushions of embroidered velvet were arranged against the wall, and three immense *mankals* of blazing charcoal diffused an agreeable heat through the chamber. Our kind host, in introducing us to our new quarters, made many apologies for the poor accommodation he offered; his best furniture, he said, had been removed to the city during the war.



Coffee-making.

Sheikh Ass'ad 'Amer is a member of the noblest family in Haurân, and he is, besides, one of the handsomest men in Syria. His countenance is mild, and the expression of his features very pleasing. A soft voice, and gentle but easy and dignified manners, indicated the character we had heard of him—that of a man humane, hospitable, and courteous. His appearance had little of the fierce daring

which characterises his race, but the compressed lip and steady eye show that he does not lack the courage and firmness inherent in the Druze people. We were afterwards informed that he had taken no part in the late war, and that he had sent all the Christians of Hît and Hiyât to Damascus, to escape the ravages of soldiers and Arabs. Indeed, one would suppose that the history of his family might afford too fearful proofs of the horrors of war for him lightly to engage in it. Three of his brothers and four of his nephews were slain in battle, and of these *four fell by his side in one day!*

Our reception in his house, and his attention to us during our short stay, were calculated to establish the high name he has gained for profuse hospitality. Had it not been for his deserved popularity in this respect, combined with the mildness of his rule and his kindness to all under him, he could not have dared to remain neutral during the war. Next to bravery in battle, to be reckoned hospitable is the proudest distinction an Arab chief can obtain. A plentiful repast of honey, *dibs*, butter, and sweetmeats, was served soon after our entrance, and at sunset a feast was prepared for us which far surpassed anything of the kind I had seen. A whole sheep, roasted and stuffed with rice, graced the centre; beside it was a huge dish of *pillau*, some three feet in diameter. Round these were ranged nearly twenty other dishes of various dainties,—fowls, soups, *kibbeh*, *burghul*, and a host of others. Round these again were thin cakes of bread in piles, on the top of each of which was placed a wooden spoon, the only instrument used in this primitive land in taking food, and even the spoon is a recent importation. All the dishes were of copper, tinned, and they were placed on a large circular mat in the middle of the floor. The guests squat round, each stretching forward hand or spoon, and helping himself to whatever he preferred. We were first invited to dine, and, having finished, the other guests, with the servants, advanced. Then a portion was set aside for the sheikh; and the members of his household, retainers, and such of the villagers as were present, fell upon the remainder. Before this third relay the pyramid of rice

disappeared ; the bones of sheep and fowls were stripped of every vestige of flesh ; and the soup, burghul, and pillau were thrown into one huge dish and devoured.

But enough of a Druze banquet. Even so much I would not have inflicted on my reader, were it not that it shows the primitive state of society in this ancient kingdom of Bashan. The hospitality of primeval days remains : strangers could not then pass the house or tent of the patriarch without being constrained to go in and take food ; and so it is now. The expedition in the preparation of food, when lamb, or kid, or fatted calf was brought and killed, and the bread kneaded and baked, and the dainties, hastily prepared, were set before the stranger—all this is illustrated here in the incidents of every-day life. It seemed to me, as I wandered among the hills of Bashan, as if time had retrograded many centuries. The strange stories I used to read in boyhood were realized. *These* surely are the tents of Abraham ; or *these* are the dwellings of Israel. These are the salutations with which the patriarchs were wont to address strangers ; and these the prayers for their safety and welfare when they took their departure. At whatever house we lodged, a sheep or a lamb was killed for us, and bread baked. It was sometimes near sunset when we reached the house ; but in due time the dainties appeared. To whatever village we went among the Druzes, invitations were given us to stay and eat. Once and again has one seized my horse's bridle, and said, "Will not my lord descend while his servants prepare a little food ?" In one village our intercession saved a lamb which we saw hurried away to slaughter just as we entered the street, before a word had been spoken. The chief had seen us approaching, and "he made haste to kill a lamb ;" fortunately we were in time to save it, by assuring its hospitable master that we *could not* remain. At another village, where we took refuge from a passing shower, we observed the flour taken and the water poured upon it, to prepare unleavened cakes ; and it was with much difficulty we could prevent the work from being prosecuted.

These things may seem trifling ; but they are trifles which illustrate Bible stories. It is by such incidents Scripture scenes are impressed on the memory, and the truthfulness of the narratives in God's Word irresistibly forced on the mind. Could stronger evidence be desired of the truth and faithfulness of a narrative 3000 years old than the witnessing of every little circumstance attending it realized in the ordinary customs of the people now residing on the spot? Bible story assumes a living character when studied in Bible lands. The localities, the costumes, the manners and customs, are unchanged. The language too, though different, is nearly allied to the Hebrew ; and the modes of expression and forms of salutation are identical.



Ruined Temple at Kunawât.

CHAPTER XI.

TOUR IN BASHAN—THE NORTHERN SECTION OF JEBEL HAURÂN.

Topography of the plain of BASHAN—Singular features of the Lejah—Vast numbers of deserted towns—Buildings of Hît—Their antiquity—Inscriptions and dates—Visit to Bathanyeh, Batanæa—Ancient houses—Deserted towns—The province of Batanæa identified—Stone doors—Druze horsemanship—Visit to Shûka, the ancient Saccæa—Interesting ruins—Ancient churches—Errors in map of Berghaus—Position of Safâh—Wady Liwa—Visit to Shühba—Causes of the Druze war and tyranny of Turkish rulers—Ruins of theatre, temples, &c.—Extinct volcano—Identification of site—Princes of Shehâb—Terraced hills—Mourning for the slain in battle—Ancient towns—Ruins of Suleim identified with Neapolis—Beautiful mountain scenery—Visit to Kunawât, KENATH—Splendid ruins—A Druze schoolmaster—Character of the Bedawîn—Description of Kunawât—Historical notices—Date of principal buildings.

February 2nd.—This morning dawned beautifully. The sky was unclouded; the mists, which on the previous day hung round the hills and overspread the plains, had disappeared, and the atmosphere was clear and transparent. Ascending to the roof of the sheikh's house, which commands a view of the whole plain to Hermon, I examined the features of the country. The district lying between Jebel Haurân on the S.E., and Jebel esh-Sheikh on the N.W., is a plain, about 40 miles in breadth. On its northern side is the barren ridge of Khiyârah. On the S. it has no natural boundary, as it extends unbroken far as the eye can see from the heights of Sülkhad; but we may assume as its border Wady Zêdy, which runs from Büsrah to Sheriat el-Mandhûr. This district embraces the plain of *Haurân*, the *Lejah*, and portions of *Jedûr* and *Jaulân*; and these provinces respectively correspond to the ancient *Auranitis*, *Trachonitis*, *Ituræa*, and *Gaulanitis*. The Lejah is, in a geological point of view, the most wonderful district I have seen. I shall have occasion to speak more fully of it, as well as of the others; but I refer to it here to enable the reader to follow me in my description of the physical features. As seen from Hît, the Lejah resembles a lake agitated by a strong wind, and any one who has seen Loch Lomond while a winter tempest swept over it, and the troubled waters assumed the gloomy hue of the clouded heavens, may form some idea of the appearance of the Lejah as seen from Hît. Its eastern border is marked by Wady Liwa, beyond which stretches a plain far as the eye can see. Haurân is studded with conical tells; but there are only two within the borders of the Lejah.

While seated on the house-top the sheikh came up, and, on my remarking the extent of the prospect and the large number of towns and villages embraced in it, he volunteered to tell me their names, and I gladly wrote them down as he enumerated them.

Hît is about a mile and a half in circumference, and the general character of the architecture resembles that of Hiyât. There are several square towers, but the buildings to which

they are attached have nothing about them of the nature of ecclesiastical edifices. There is one tower of much superior workmanship, though of the same dimensions and plan. It stands apart from other buildings, and is complete in itself. In almost every town and village I visited in these mountains I observed one or more similar towers, and my impression is they were intended for tombs. Those I found at Kunawât have still the sarcophagi in them. The tombs on the hill-sides near Palmyra are of the same character, though in general larger and more highly ornamented. Many of the ancient streets in Hît can be traced, notwithstanding the masses of ruins and rubbish that have accumulated during the course of ages. They are narrow and tortuous, and bear a marked contrast to those of other towns in this region which are of Roman origin, or at least were reconstructed in the Roman age. The houses are massive and simple in plan, with stone roofs and stone doors. Some of the latter are panelled, and ornamented with tasteful mouldings, which appear in most cases to have been added at a later date.

All the inscriptions hitherto discovered at Hît are of the Roman age. The oldest has a date equivalent to A.D. 120; but on a close inspection I arrived at the conclusion that most if not all of them were of a much later age than the buildings on which they occur. During and subsequent to the era of the Seleucidæ, many of the buildings appear to have been remodelled, and some temples and other public structures erected, and at that time the Greek inscriptions were added. It requires careful examination here, and elsewhere in Bashan, to distinguish between the more modern and the primeval remains. Hurried tourists, whose attention is naturally attracted by the more imposing structures of the Roman age, are apt entirely to overlook the more simple and massive, but far more interesting, relics of primeval architecture.

At Hît there is no fountain, but in the centre of the town is a tank for collecting rain-water. There is, besides, a subterranean aqueduct coming from the mountains, which still

conveys sufficient water for domestic purposes. Beyond the walls is a large subterranean reservoir, from which canals formerly conducted the water to the principal houses. We did not see these works, but we drank of the water, and found it excellent, and we were assured that during the heat of summer it is cold as ice. It is generally believed that the source is in the distant mountains; but I think the water is collected in the same way as in the plain of Damascus, by a canal carried beneath the surface.' Due S. of Hīt, about 10 miles distant, a conical peak shoots up over the surrounding hills, and forms a prominent object in the landscape. It is called *Tell Abu Tumais*, and is one of the highest summits of *Jebel Haurân*.

Our kind host used every effort to persuade us to spend the day with him; but when he saw we were determined on proceeding, he sent with us his nephew and another horseman, to serve as guide and guard, while he himself stated that he would ride to *Shühba*, and acquaint his brother *Fâres* of our intention to visit him. We ordered our servants to accompany him, as we wished to visit the ruins of *Bathanyeh* and *Shûka*.

At 11.10 we rode out of the court-yard, amid the *salâms* of the assembled villagers, and proceeded across the fields in a direction about N.E. towards *Bathanyeh*. The soil is of unrivalled fertility, and the wheat is the finest in Syria. The fields were already green with the new crop, which was springing up with a luxuriance seldom seen in this land. In several places I observed an ancient road, with large sections of the pavement remaining, and the foundations of walls along each side. The day was bright and cool, the turf firm and smooth, our horses fresh, and our own spirits high. Our new companions were eager to display the metal of their steeds, and their skill in horsemanship; so, giving rein to our horses, we dashed across the slopes, and soon reached *Bathanyeh*. The distance from *Hīt* is about an hour, but in less than half that time we accomplished it.

Bathanyeh is situated on the northern slope of *Jebel Haurân*, commanding an extensive view to the N. and N.W.

About an hour below it the gentle declivity terminates in a plain, which reaches to the Lakes of Damascus. About half an hour to the N.W. are two conical hills, beside which stand the deserted villages of Ta'ala and Ta'alla, and beyond them, a little to the right, rises Tell Khalediyeh, crowned with ruins. These ruins were referred to by the Druzes as extensive and beautiful, and we regretted our inability to visit them. But we now saw that a month would be requisite to explore the interesting remains scattered through this mountain-range alone. Deserted and partially ruined cities, with multitudes of inscriptions, stud their eastern declivities and the plain along their base. Time did not admit of our visiting these ; but it is to be hoped some enterprising traveller will ere long leave the beaten track and penetrate these unknown regions. From every place where we reached the boundary of our prescribed route I turned aside with regret ; for far away beyond it I saw enticing ruins and unexplored towns and villages. From Bathanyeh I saw three in the plain, in addition to those above referred to ; there were thus six deserted towns within view in this direction.

Bathanyeh is not so large as Hît ; but the buildings are of a superior style, and in better preservation. On our arrival we observed the circular openings of a subterranean aqueduct approaching the town from the heights above ; following it round the walls to the N.E., we dismounted, and, giving our horses in charge to some shepherds, proceeded to examine the buildings. So far as I am aware, no traveller has ever before visited this place, or even referred to it as tending to identify the province of *Batanea*. On entering the town we passed along a paved street to a large building, with a square tower, some 40 feet in height, beside the entrance. The gateway was shut by folding-doors of stone ; but we threw them open with ease, and entered a flagged court-yard, in part covered with ruins. Around this court were the apartments, each opening into it by a stone door.

Having copied a Greek inscription, I scrambled over heaps of stones and tottering walls to the terraced roof,

which in most places is as sound as when first constructed ; and from this commanding spot I took bearings of the prominent objects in view, and roughly sketched the features of the country.

Having finished my observations, I went in search of my companions, winding through narrow streets, and climbing over half-ruined houses. I had a good opportunity of examining the character of the buildings and of tracing the lines of the streets. There are no public buildings of any extent ; but there is evidence of comfort and wealth in the private dwellings. Durability and simplicity appear to have been the objects aimed at by these utilitarian architects ; and they have succeeded so well that, though their land has been long deserted, and their city long forsaken, and though the name and the history of the inhabitants have for centuries been forgotten, these mansions still remain. I discovered my companions at the foot of a tower, looking up at a tempting inscription beside one of the turret windows, but so high as to be illegible. Mr. Barnett left us, and was soon out of sight amid heaps of ruins. A few minutes afterwards a large slab was dislodged from the window, and the head of our enthusiastic friend soon occupied its place within a few inches of the inscription. Letter after letter he traced with his finger, while I acted as scribe.

At the base of the tower I observed a fragment of an inscription upon a loose stone, but it was so imperfect I did not stop to copy it. Near this I entered a small building of singular design, and beautiful workmanship. I passed from the street into an open court through a stone door. In front of one of the chambers in this court is a porch, supported on two columns, on which were numerous crosses. On the other side a door led into a large apartment, and from it a door about 3 feet 6 inches high opened into a long narrow chamber, between which and the former there was a range of openings in the wall, with stone troughs, accessible from both sides. This was evidently a stable, and its admirable plan and costly fittings bear testimony to the wealth and taste of its ancient proprietor.

On a stone in the interior is an inscription in raised characters, but unfortunately I had not sufficient light to copy it. On the northern side of the town is a large building, standing almost alone, which appears to have been used as a mosque. The floor is flagged, and the stone roof, now fallen, was supported on columns, whose capitals resemble Ionic. The whole structure was built of ancient materials.

Such is the situation and such the character and state of the buildings in Bathanyeh. There can be no doubt that we have here preserved the name of the Roman province of *Batanæa*, and the Syrian kingdom of BASHAN. It is quite true that both these names were given to *provinces*; but it is also true that there was an important *town* of the same name. At present there is a province called *Ard el-Bathanyeh*, "the country of Bathanyeh," embracing the whole of Jebel Haurân, with a section of the plain on the northern and eastern sides. It is called by the natives either *Ard el-Bathanyeh* or *Jebel ed-Druze*; the name *Jebel Haurân* is only used by strangers. The central and southern sections of the mountain-range are picturesque—conical peaks, bold precipices, deep ravines, and winding vales are all richly clothed with evergreen forests of oak. The northern slopes are different. Here the declivities are only diversified by naked, conical hills, but the extreme richness of the soil compensates for other defects.

Turning away from these interesting remains, we rode across the fields eastward towards Tell Azrân—our horses sinking to the pasterns in the rich mould of the freshly ploughed ground. In a few minutes we came to a large area of smooth turf, the sight of which was too tempting to allow our Druze companions to travel any longer at an easy pace. The young sheikh Saïd was armed with a spear, and his attendant Hassan carried a musket. The latter, striking his horse with the heavy stirrups, dashed across the plain, turning in his saddle and brandishing his gun, as if defying those behind. Saïd's eye kindled as he restrained his impatient steed, and a modest glance at us seemed to say that only a sense of his dignity as marching in our train

prevented him from giving chase. Nikôla now gave rein to his horse, and in a few moments was close upon Hassan; Saïd followed, and then Mr. Quail joined in the sport. The scene became very exciting, and I observed every plough in the fields stopped, and the Druzes, who held them, looking with intense interest on our party. The dexterity of the Druzes in the management of their horses, and use of arms, is as well known as their courage in the battle-field. Hassan restrained his horse as Nikôla approached, and yet seemed as if he were urging him on to greater speed; but, watching his opportunity, he swerved to the right, and suddenly drew up as the other shot past, and then again as suddenly turned his horse across the flank of his antagonist, over whom his position gave him full power with the sword. Nothing could exceed the quickness of the horse in these movements, and the admirable precision with which the feint was executed. The horses appeared to enter as much into the spirit of the sport as their masters—obeying every motion of feet, rein, or weapon—now wheeling, now dashing out at full speed, and then stopping short and sudden in their career. My own strong Arab, not over-quiet at best, became unmanageable. He pranced and reared and champed the bit till the blood flowed from his mouth. Getting tired of holding him back, I loosened the rein and let him take his own course, and he soon carried me into the midst of the mêlée. After half an hour of such exercise as I had not indulged in for years, we all gradually cooled down, and, having surmounted a swell on the eastern side of Tell Azrân, came in sight of the ruins of *Shûka*, and in a quarter of an hour were beside them.

From Bathanyeh to *Shûka* is about four miles. In several places are traces of an ancient paved road. *Shûka* is built on the side of a plateau which surmounts the slopes of Hit and Bathanyeh, and extends eastward as far as Juneineh. Along its southern side is a broad elevated ridge, separating it from Wady Nimreh. This plateau is unrivalled for the fertility of its soil and the fineness of its wheat.

A few hundred yards from *Shûka* we came to a square

tower of fine masonry, similar in form and appearance to that at Hīt. It measures 20 feet on each side by 30 high. The door is on the E., and above it is a small window. I attempted to enter; but the stench issuing from the interior prevented me, and on looking in I found it was filled to the depth of several feet with human bones. I inquired in horror what this meant, as I well knew such is not the mode of burial practised by the inhabitants of Syria. Saïd replied that these are the remains of some of the soldiers of Ibrahim Pasha, who perished on the borders of the Lejah during the Druze war—some by the sword, but many more by fatigue, thirst, and famine. Here they have been collected, as if to bear testimony to the strength of that great natural fortress, and the determination of the Druzes. On a tablet over the door is a Greek inscription, in small but well-formed characters, and on each side of it is another tablet, with inscriptions equally long. Finding we had not time to copy them all, we determined to take that on the left hand; but I have since found, greatly to my regret, that it is the one Burckhardt copied, having no time for the others, like ourselves. It appears from this inscription that the mausoleum was erected by a certain *Bassos* for himself, his children, and wife, and was completed in "the year of the city" 70. This is probably the Bostrian era, and consequently the date of the monument is A.D. 176.

On entering Shūka I climbed a square tower, to gain a general view of the town and surrounding country. The ruins I estimated at about two miles in circuit. Few of the buildings are in a good state of preservation, but some of them exhibit marks of considerable taste. The lines of most of the streets can be traced, though encumbered with ruins; they are narrow, but straighter and more regular than those of Hīt or Bathanyeh. I observed four square towers besides that referred to above, but of a different character, and of an older date. I walked eastward over immense heaps of stones, and soon came to a large and imposing structure. It was at one time a church, and was

divided by short clumsy piers, supporting semicircular arches, into nave and aisles. The length of the building is 72 feet, and the breadth inside 52. On passing out of the door, I was surprised to observe the chasteness and beauty of its external decorations. It has a deep moulded border, and a richly ornamented cornice. On each side, 10 feet from the ground, is a niche with shell top, and a pediment supported by four Ionic columns. Beyond these are two side doors, and in the intervals brackets for statues. The upper part of the front, however, is flat and bare; it is probable that it was originally covered by a portico. The contrast between the exterior and interior is so great, that I concluded the building had been a temple, and was remodelled for Christian worship.

I proceeded over ruinous houses and narrow streets toward that part of the town now inhabited. The stones have here been cleared away from the centre of the streets, to form a path for animals, and similar paths have also been made through the rubbish that encumbers a few of the ancient court-yards. The present inhabitants (Druzes) have taken possession of such chambers as have their roofs and doors perfect; they lie much lower than the buildings of Grecian origin, and are manifestly much older. There are far more houses still habitable than there are people to occupy them.

Mr. Barnett went with me to examine the remains of two fine buildings on the E. side of the town. One of them is ruinous, with the exception of the front, but the other is nearly entire. Round the interior are niches and brackets for statues, and on the front wall is a profusion of chaste ornaments. Near it is a fragment of an inscription on a large stone, from which it appears that one of these buildings was a church dedicated to the saints and martyrs George and Sergius, erected by "*Tiberinus*, the Bishop, in the year 263" (A.D. 369). From this inscription we learn that this town was in early ages the seat of a bishop; its name, however, does not appear in any of the ecclesiastical lists I have seen, nor has Ritter been able to identify it.

There can scarcely be a doubt that in these ruins we have all that remains of the *Sacca* of Ptolemy, situated in the eastern part of the province of *Batanæa*.

At 2.40 we mounted and rode over a rocky swell into the fertile plain, through which we dashed at a gallop to Shühba, now visible on the summit of a rugged ridge. Our course was through fresh-ploughed fields till we reached the regular path. Here again are traces of an ancient road. After riding about two miles we saw on the ridge of the mountains, two hours distant, a ruin resembling a castle. Our attendants had forgotten its name, but pointed out, on a conical peak below it, the village of *Tufhah*; and they informed us that in the wady, half an hour farther E., is Nimreh. A deep and wild ravine commences a little eastward of the latter place, and runs past *Tufhah* to Shühba. We could see its course beyond the rising ground on our left. This ravine divides the acclivities of Hît, Bathanyeh, and Juneineh, from the mountains on the S. The main chain rises abrupt and rugged on its southern bank, and the scenery becomes bolder and more picturesque, the hill-sides and glens being clothed with evergreen oak.

Half-way between Shûka and Shühba we passed the small deserted village of Deir esh-Sh'ahr. On leaving it we crossed a shallow wady, and, after riding over a broad swell of fine land, reached the brow of the great ravine. This ravine, from its commencement to this place, is called Wady Nimreh, but throughout the whole of its subsequent course along the side of the Lejah to Burâk, and thence through the plain to Hîjâneh, its name is Wady Liwa.

Crossing the ravine, we reached Shühba, situated on the southern bank. The distance from Shûka is $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles. We scrambled over the ruined wall beside a Roman gate, and rode along an ancient paved street to the residence of the sheikh. Here we found a large concourse of people, but the first to hold out the hand of welcome was our kind host of the previous night, Sheikh Ass'ad. He introduced us to his brother Fâres, who had advanced to receive us, and we were ushered into an apartment

where we found comfort, smiling faces, and a hearty welcome.

Sheikh Fâres bears a striking resemblance to his brother in manner, features, and figure, but there is a little more of sternness in his expression. He is now the most powerful chief in the Haurân ; that is, he is able to bring the greatest number of followers into the field. He took an active part in the late war. After coffee, as the Druzes do not smoke, most of the strangers withdrew, knowing that the room we occupied belonged to the harîm, and had been specially prepared for our use. The conversation now turned upon the war, and it soon became evident these sheikhs thought we had some political object in our present journey. I evaded the direct inquiries addressed to me as to the intentions of the Government, of which I had had private information before leaving Damascus ; and I merely expressed my opinion that the Sultan would not insist on the conscription, but would probably accept an equivalent. They expressed their willingness to give any reasonable equivalent, and then, in strong and even pathetic language, stated their case fully, and appealed to me whether the Government could reasonably ask soldiers. "We are here," said Fâres, "on the borders of the desert, and are compelled to wage unceasing warfare with the Bedawîn, to protect our wives, our children, and our property. No regular troops come near us ; no garrison is maintained in any border town, or castle, to keep the tribes of the desert in check : the produce of our fields we are forced to send to the city under an armed escort ; and if they take away our sons, and send them into other countries, how are we to protect our homes ?" They also said they had no interest in the soil they tilled, and that they were but slaves cultivating land the property of others, and paying their masters their hard-earned profits, while nothing was done either to defend or encourage them in their labours. "We cannot possibly be worse than we now are. It is because no others can live here we are tolerated. Let the Sultan give us the protection of his armies ; let him defend us from the forays

of the Bedawîn ; let him give us an interest in the land we till, that we may have some place we can call home, and that we may be able to plant vineyards, olive-groves, and orchards, like our brethren in Lebanon—and then we will do as others do.” I knew that this is not the real reason why the Druzes refuse conscripts ; the reason is to be sought for in their love of freedom, and dread of restraint and of separation from their brethren. But who could answer such arguments as these ? Who could say to them, “ Go, and with the blood of your children defend the throne of your sovereign, and leave your homes to be plundered, and your brethren slain, by marauders, while your sovereign has not the will to protect you ? ” It is contrary to human nature to defend that in which we have no interest, and to leave our homes a prey to the spoiler while we fight the battles of others. This truth applies in its full force to the Druzes of Haurân ; and the true policy of the Government would be to organize them into an irregular corps for guarding the frontier, and to accept this in lieu of service in the army. But the Turks, with their customary recklessness, have plunged into a difficulty, out of which they will try in vain to release themselves with honour. They sent an army to compel the Druzes to submit to the conscription, and that army, ill-equipped and worse commanded, has been forced to withdraw in disgrace ; and now, through the intervention of strangers, they desire a compromise. They will be compelled, in the end, to concede all they contended for at first ; and concession will come with a bad grace when the terms are dictated by conquerors. It is impossible that the Turkish army, as it at present exists in Syria, can conquer the Haurân ; or, even should the province submit, it would be impossible for the army to retain it. A great part of the country is impracticable for cavalry and artillery, while it affords every facility for skirmishers, and precludes the possibility of acting with large bodies of the line. During the winter troops cannot live in it without good barracks, and during the summer they are enervated by heat and scarcity of water. To subdue and retain the

Haurân it will be necessary to establish several strong garrisons in well-appointed fortresses, and to construct military roads through the wildest districts: were this done, the country would soon become the granary and the garden of Syria.

The noise and bustle of dinner broke up the discussion on politics; and if the honour done us is to be measured by the profusion of the dainties, we ought certainly to entertain a high sense of it. Three sheep had been slain, and one of them, roasted entire, graced the centre; the fragments of the others, with huge piles of rice and little dishes of delicacies, radiated round. Sheikh Ass'ad, at our invitation, joined us, and seemed highly pleased at this monster banquet. Relay after relay of villagers, strangers, and retainers did ample justice to our host's munificence, and, among others, we observed our friend from Palmyra, who now appeared in a new character. He had come to buy corn, but his money (7000 piastres) had been stolen by the way, and he did not know what to do. Corn he must have, and the compassionate Sheikh Fâres was willing to aid him. In fact, the shrewd Druze chief treated the affair of the lost money as a fabrication. He did not tell the Bedawy so, for that would have been contrary to the rules of hospitality; but he proposed to barter his corn for a part of the Bedawy's camels, which he suggested would not now be needed. The bargain was not closed, and, somehow or other, the missing money appeared next morning.

February 3rd.—The dawn found us ready for a more minute examination of the ruins of which we had obtained but a glance on the previous day. Our time was limited, and we resolved to use it to the best advantage. Taking a guide, we sallied out through droves of camels and donkeys, and crowds of men. Passing over heaps of hewn stones, we arrived at a large and curious building, and to reach it we descended into the court of a primeval house, nearly 15 feet below the surface, so deep are the accumulated ruins; here we found ancient pavement, and a large chamber with stone door and roof complete. Some buildings of the

Greek and Roman age had been erected over it. Above our heads rose a curved wall. We went round to the front, which is towards the E. This was originally open, the side walls terminating abruptly. In the centre is a semi-circular apse 14 feet wide, and on each side a niche for a statue. In front is a large open space, probably a circus, but it is so much encumbered with ruins that we could not ascertain whether there are any remains of seats. Along its northern side runs one of the great streets of the city, the pavement of which is entire. A portion of the street has been cut through the solid rock, and is arched over.

On the south side of the circus are remains of a temple. The main doorway is walled up, but I entered the crypt underneath, where there are several ranges of heavy short piers supporting the vaulted roof. The principal apartment was over this, but is now ruinous. On the northern wall are two brackets for statues, with inscriptions, but they are illegible.

We crossed a rising ground, and came suddenly upon one of the most interesting buildings in the city—a theatre in a good state of preservation. The exterior walls are nearly perfect; the end being a semicircle, and the sides prolonged in parallel lines. In front are three entrances to the *porticus*, and from the *porticus* three spacious doors open on the *arena*. The *porticus* is carried round the angles and a few yards along the sides; and two doors open from the sides, passing under the seats to the *arena*. The arena is 15 yards wide and the same in depth: around it are seven rows of seats, and then a passage, 7 feet broad and 54 yards from wall to wall. Behind this was a wall 6 feet high, over which were seven rows of benches. From the *præcinctio* four arched passages lead out, underneath the upper benches to a corridor which extends round the semicircle, and from it nine doors opened to the outside.

I had completed my measurements, when a messenger from the sheikh arrived to summon us to breakfast. The morning's walk had whetted my appetite, and yet I turned away with regret from the examination of those interesting

remains of a more prosperous age. As we went toward the sheikh's house by a narrow path among heaps of ruins, I noticed upon a small stone, high up in a square turret, a piece of good sculpture. It represents a deity seated upon a throne with an altar before him ; a priest stands in front, preparing to sacrifice an ox, while a man approaches from behind with a garland-crown, and is followed by another leading an animal for an offering.

At breakfast we arranged with our host for a Druze guide to accompany us throughout our excursion in the Haurân, and to return with us, if necessary, to Damascus. We then left our servants to make the necessary arrangements for mules, and again set out to complete our survey.

Having entered the main street, we turned northward along a side street, but, after proceeding a short distance, we perceived that no ruins of any importance lay in this direction ; we consequently turned back, and went along the street eastward. We passed through the arches already referred to, and now observed little recesses, like stalls, on each side. Burckhardt supposes they were tombs, but the side of one of the most public thoroughfares does not seem a suitable place for the burial of the dead.

Continuing along the street eastward, we came to the remains of a temple, with a portico of six columns, five of which are standing ; they have brackets for statues similar to those in the great colonnade at Palmyra. The architecture is Corinthian, and the details executed with taste. This temple faces the S. : and opposite it, on the other side of the street, was another building apparently similar in design, but now in ruins. The interior was fitted up as a church, with a dome supported upon pillars and arches. Not far below it are three cubical structures of solid masonry, each 10 feet high and 17 square. There were originally four of them, and they stood in the centre of the city. Between them ran four straight streets, each 25 feet wide, to the four great gates of the city. The pavement of the streets remains in many places quite perfect, and is a beautiful specimen of Roman work. From the top of one of the

cubical structures I obtained a good view of the eastern and southern divisions of the city, and seldom have I seen such a confused expanse of ruins; it seems as if some destroying angel had swept over it, laying prostrate every building. As the whole city was constructed of stone, the ground is completely covered with shapeless heaps, through which the lines of the streets run like broad furrows. The main streets to the E. and S. are, in a great measure, free of stones; and they present a singular aspect, running straight and smooth through the wilderness of ruins and terminating at triple gateways still almost perfect.

We proceeded southward to a large bath. The walls are of immense strength, and contain pipes apparently intended to let the water down from a cistern in the upper story. The chambers were spacious and lofty, with vaulted roofs. Close to it, on the S., are the ruins of an aqueduct, carried along on arches nearly 40 feet high. Ascending to the top of the bath by a staircase, I was able to trace the piers of the aqueduct across the ruins to the S.E. angle of the city, and thence along the southern bank of Wady Nimreh for a considerable distance. It is said to have originally brought water from a fountain E. of Nimreh, and must consequently have been upwards of 10 miles in length.

From this commanding height I obtained a general idea of the form and extent of this ancient city, or at least of that portion of it which was enclosed within the walls, and I sketched a plan of the whole. The city is nearly square, with a little inequality on the western side caused by a deep ravine. The breadth from N. to S. I estimated at 800 yards, and the length about 1000. Burckhardt states that there are *eight* gates, but I could only see five: two on the south, and one on each of the other sides. The city appears to have been built with great regularity, the principal streets intersecting each other at right angles. The ground on which it is built is rocky and uneven, rising gradually from the brow of the wady on the E., to the sheikh's house which stands on the top of the ridge; and then descending to the

brow of another wady, shallow but rugged, along which the wall runs. Beyond the latter wady rise abruptly the two lofty tells, El-Ghurârah and Shühba.

We made our way back to the sheikh's house, and, selecting an intelligent guide, ascended Tell Shühba. The ascent, though not long, was difficult, owing to the deep coating of small black stones, intermixed with porous lava, light tinkling cinders, and volcanic scorïæ. Our attention was attracted by these strange features, and we felt persuaded there must be an extinct crater near; on reaching the summit we found ourselves standing on the brink of it. On the western side of the tell is a large, deep, bowl-shaped cavity, with jagged upheaved rocks forming a rim, and the whole exterior and interior coated with the *débris* of eruptions. S. by E. is Tell El-Ghurârah, a few hundred yards distant—so called because it resembles a *Ghurârah*, or "heap of wheat." A line of tells stretches to the N., culminating in Tell Sheihân, surmounted by a white wely. Beyond this, and away to the westward, is the Lejah; a sea of rocks, whose surface is only varied by the solitary peaks of Amâra and Sumeid. The country on the W. and S. is stony, the Lejah approaching the foot of the line of tells, and the plain southward of it being almost as rugged as the Lejah itself. On the S.E. rises Jebel Haurân with a gentle slope, but rugged and deeply furrowed. The loose stones along the slopes have been collected into heaps and built up in the walls of terraces, and there is evidence that the whole was once covered with vineyards.

There are fewer remains of remote antiquity in this city than in most of the others in Jebel Haurân. Stone doors and roofs are found, deep, deep down in the court-yards, almost covered by the *débris* of later buildings; but not in such numbers as in Hît, Bathanyeh, or Shûka; and I did not see a single example of a stone door on any house or temple of Roman origin. The city, in fact, seems to have been rebuilt by the Romans shortly after this province fell into their power.

It is singular that we possess no historic record of a city

of such extent, whose buildings were so costly, and displayed so much of architectural skill and taste. It is one of many in this district which have come down to us without name or story. A diligent search among its ruins might bring to light its name on some inscribed tablet; and it is to be hoped some enterprising traveller will undertake the thorough examination of the deserted cities of Bashan.

Shühba is celebrated in the history of this country under Mohammedan rule, as having been for a time the residence of the princely family of *Shehâb*, from whom it received its present name. This family, which has for years been one of the most powerful in Syria, derives its origin from the ancient Arab tribe of *Koreish*, and its members thus claim relationship with the *Prophet*. One of their ancestors migrated about the seventh century from the southern shores of Arabia, and took up his residence in Shühba. There his descendants remained, with their property and dependants, till the twelfth century, when, during the wars of Nûr ed-Dîn and Saladin, they resolved to leave a place where they were exposed to the depredations of the contending parties, and to take up their abode amid the fastnesses of Lebanon. They set out, but in passing Wady et-Teim, near Hasbeiya, they were attacked by the Frank garrison of that stronghold, and, having defeated them, took possession of the castle, which they have ever since retained. The late Emîr, Saïd ed-Dîn, of Hasbeiya, was head of the house; the Emîr Effendi, of Rasheiya, was another scion; and the Emîr Beshîr Shehâb, so long the governor of Lebanon, was a junior member of the same family.

Everything being arranged for our route, we set out, accompanied by a new muleteer, Yûsef, a Christian from Lebanon, and our servants, well mounted upon strong mules, which had been captured by Sheikh Fâres during the war. Passing over the ruined wall, near the site of the W. gate, we descended by a difficult and rocky path into the ravine at the S.W. angle of the city. We followed the line of an ancient road between Tell Ghurârah and the mountains, in a course a little W. of S. The basalt rock here

crops up every few yards, in sharp points and jagged ridges; broken fragments are also abundant, but have been carefully collected into heaps, or built up in the walls of terraces. The soil between the rocks is deep and rich; and the slopes seem admirably adapted for the vine and the olive. Now, however, there is not a tree planted by man. In forty minutes we reached a shallow rocky glen, in which, on our left, we saw the ancient village of *Murdük*; and N. of it, on the summit of a ridge, a white-domed wely. Our attention was attracted by a procession of women, whose veils of spotless white hung gracefully from the tall *tantûrs*, or "horns." They were walking from a clump of new-made graves toward the village, singing a wild and mournful chant. I inquired the meaning of this strange procession. Yûsef replied that eleven of the men of *Murdük* had fallen in the war, and the women of *Shühba* had come to mourn with the widows of the slain. There was something in this scene deeply affecting. The simple recital of Yûsef, the half-ruined village, the solitude of the little valley, the fresh graves, the train of mourners clad in white winding among the rocks toward their deserted homes—these acted strongly on my feelings, perhaps because they brought back the memory of sore bereavements.

In twenty minutes more we entered Wady Ifhâmeh; and soon afterwards, on ascending its S. bank, came in sight of a village of the same name, about a quarter of an hour on our left. On our right we saw *Deir el-Leben*, and beyond it *Rîmet el-Luhf*. At *Deir el-Leben* ("The convent of milk") are the ruins of a large convent, with cells and cloisters. Here Burckhardt found a Greek inscription over the door of one of the cells, from which we learn that a temple of the sun formerly occupied the spot. It was erected by two men, *Cassius Malichathos* of *Rîmea*, and *Paulus Maximinus* of *Mardocko*. In these names we recognise the neighbouring villages of *Rîmeh* and *Murdük*.

In 1 h. 35 min. from *Shühba* we reached *Suleim*, situated on a tell on the border of the plain. As soon as we halted I climbed the first building we came to—a beautiful temple

—and there had time and opportunity to examine the country. Westward the view embraced the plain of Haurân and Lejah, with a portion of Jaulân and Jedûr, to Jebel el-Heish and Hermon. On the N.E. Tell Sheihân formed a prominent object, its smooth conical peak rising over the undulating intervening ground. Farther to the E. were the stony declivities of the mountains; from Suleim a deep wady runs up into them, with terraced sides, and the heights above clothed with oak forests.

Suleim is about a mile and a half in circumference, and contains the remains of large buildings, most of them heaps of ruin. The temple on the top of which I stood is of great beauty. It is some distance from the town, on the N. It had a small portico of two columns between *ante*, supporting a sculptured pediment, now lying in heaps. The interior must have been profusely decorated, as it is filled with large blocks covered with bas-reliefs of flowers, fruit, and wreaths of vine. In later ages it was fitted up as a church. On a stone in front of the building, Mr. Barnett discovered a long Greek inscription, which had hitherto escaped the notice of the few travellers who have visited this region. When first observed it was almost concealed underneath other blocks; but, by the assistance of the athletic Druzes, it was soon sufficiently exposed to be copied. The letters were small, and in places almost obliterated. The last line is important as containing the name of the town; it may be rendered as follows:—"Eneas the Neapolitan erected this temple." I conclude from this that Eneas was a native, and that the ancient Greek name of the city was *Neapolis*.

There was an ecclesiastical city of this name in the province of Arabia, which is always mentioned in connexion with Canatha, Dionysia, and others in the district. As is the case in many parts of Syria, the ancient name has been resumed and the Greek one forgotten; now, instead of Heliopolis, Cæsarea, and Neapolis, we have Bâ'albek, Baniâs, and Suleim.

While Mr. Barnett was engaged in copying the inscription, we wandered through the town. We visited the

remains of extensive baths, and near them the foundations of a temple, standing on an elevated platform. After some time spent in climbing over heaps of ruins, we reached the house of the Sheikh, and were received with much courtesy, though there was some restraint in his manner, owing, no doubt, to his being ignorant of who we were and what was our object. He pressed us to enter his house and take coffee, and said he had sent his brother to invite us ; but we expressed our regret that we were in such haste to reach Kunawât that we could not stop. I noticed beside his house a short Greek inscription upon a tablet ; and I also saw several others in various parts of the ruins, mutilated and illegible. On returning to the temple we found that our Druze guide, Mahmûd, had arrived from Shühba, having waited for letters. We had now another ordeal of invitations to pass through from the sheikh's brother, who, having heard a satisfactory report of us, used every effort to persuade us to remain. While Nikôla replied and apologized, and expressed regret and deep sorrow, with all Arab formality, we examined some large caverns in front of the temple. They are 30 feet deep, and the roof is supported by arches, in some places resting on piers of the natural rock, and in others of roughly-hewn stones. They may have been intended for tanks, or, more probably, for grain-stores. We had seen similar but smaller ones at Hît and Bathanyeh. All the ancient writers who describe this country speak of the caverns with which it abounds ; but of these more will be said in the sequel.

At 2.25 we mounted and rode off amid the *salâms* of a large crowd of Druzes. *Mahmûd*, our guide, was an athletic and determined-looking Druze. His dress was not that usually worn by his sect ; instead of the white turban, he wore the *kefiyeh* and *ageil* of the Arabs. He was armed with sword and pistols, but had neither spear nor gun ; and he rode a splendid grey charger. He seemed a morose and silent man, little inclined for conversation, but always answering questions distinctly, though briefly. I soon found that I could rely on the correctness of his answers, as he

unhesitatingly acknowledged ignorance of towns and localities which he had not himself visited. Our road led us up the easy slope towards Kunawât. At first we rode along the side of a valley, and then crossed the ridge on its south bank and descended to Wady Kunawât, through which runs a stream, the first we had seen since we left the 'Awaj. From the height above this wady we saw the town of 'Atil, a mile and a half on our right, surrounded by forests of oak. It lies on the road from Suleim to Suweideh.

Along the side of our path were traces of a Roman road, the pavement in some places entire. We observed it at various points between Suleim and Kunawât. The scenery here becomes picturesque and beautiful. The mountains have bolder features, and the valleys and ravines are clothed with evergreen forests, while grey ruins appear on every side. The declivity on which Kunawât stands is covered with ruins. Clumps of tapering columns, towers, and tombs, round and square, and heavy masses of masonry, crumbling but not fallen, are grouped together in great variety amid the foliage.

After crossing the stream we rode for ten minutes along its left bank, and I then noticed a large building occupying a prominent site on our left. After fifteen minutes' winding through tangled thickets and up a steep bank, we reached the gate. It is a quadrangular structure, encompassed by a wall of fine masonry. Round the interior were cloisters, supported by handsome columns, those at the corners being heart-shaped. On the N. side is a large projection, containing the ruins of a church; but the interior fittings are of a much later date than the external walls. In the centre of the quadrangle are foundations of massive hewn stones; but the whole is now so overgrown by oak and other trees, that I found it impossible to ascertain its extent or plan. The building is called the Convent of Sumeid; and it may probably have been used as a convent in Christian times, but it was originally intended for some other purpose. The door is surrounded with sculptured wreaths and bunches of grapes.

In our approach to this building we did not see a living creature, and we were ourselves hid by the thickets; but we had only been a few minutes engaged in our examination when several Arabs, with long guns, were seen peeping over a cairn in front of the gate. We took no notice of their movements, but continued our explorations. Some of the party who had reached the gate sooner than the others wished to ride off alone; but Mahmûd, pointing to the group of hungry-looking faces, now numbering ten or twelve, quietly observed that we had better *all* ride with him. In fact, it was only the presence of this single Druze that saved us from an attack. To attempt defence in such a place would be madness, for hundreds could lie concealed behind the oak-trees. Not one of these fellows saluted us as we rode past. They looked at us with scowling faces, no doubt cursing the necessity that deprived them of their plunder.

From Deir es-Sumeid there is an ancient road to Kunawât, or *Kenath*. In twenty minutes we reached the ravine on the southern bank of which the city is built, and, crossing it by a modern bridge, rode up a Roman road to the ruined gate. A few yards beyond this we entered the court-yard of the sheikh, where we met a welcome reception.

After the salâms and the "thousand and one" wishes and prayers for our health and happiness, coffee was prepared and presented. I proposed a walk among the ruins. The sheikh offered himself as guide, and not less than twenty others followed in his train. My object was to obtain a general view of the city preparatory to a more detailed examination on the following day, half of which we purposed to devote to it.

Kunawât is built on the left bank of a deep and wild ravine. The length of the city is about a mile, and the breadth nearly half a mile. On the southern side is also a wady of considerable depth, and beyond it rises a graceful wooded hill. The ancient wall runs along the brink of the ravine, in some places on the edge of the scarped rock. After reaching the top it is carried over the ridge, and

then westward for nearly half a mile along the brow of the second wady, when it turns down the declivity in a zigzag course toward the N.W. The north-western section of the city I did not examine minutely, as it seems to contain only the ruins of private houses.

Leaving the sheikh's house, we walked up a street along the brow of the ravine ; the ancient pavement is in excellent preservation. On the right are ruins of large private houses, solidly and elegantly built. The stone doors especially attracted my attention ; most of them are panelled, and have ornamental mouldings, while a few are adorned with wreaths and fruit. I observed an aqueduct running parallel to the street. This must have been the aristocratic quarter, for the private mansions appear to have been spacious and elegant. The situation is attractive—the wild ravine below, with its torrent dashing over a rocky bed, and its theatre and temple ; and the castellated heights above, over which rise the wooded hills of Bashan. On reaching the top of the hill we turned to the right between fine buildings, and entered a spacious flagged area. On its southern side is a pile of building, as striking from its great extent as from the elegance of its architecture.

The worthy sheikh here took me by the hand, for he had become very familiar, led me to a broken place in the pavement, and pointed down to what he considered an object of no small curiosity. The whole space under our feet was one series of vaults. It was evidently a vast reservoir to which water was conveyed from the wady, and hence by ducts and canals to the upper city. The extent of the vaults I could not determine, on account of the ruins and tangled thickets which encumber the surface. I was conducted past porticoes, and over ruined walls and monuments, till we reached an elevated spot, from which the sheikh pointed, with a beaming countenance, to a ruin before us. It is a small temple of fine proportions, occupying a site well fitted to show its beauty. In front is a paved area, with vaults below, apparently connected with the others. A little farther westward we came to a hippo-

drome, encompassed by a wall which appears as if there had been several ranges of benches along it. Here we found numbers of statues of men in armour, female figures, and equestrians, the fragments of which are lying among the ruins. These figures the sheikh pointed out to me, and with much eagerness asked what they were intended for ; I answered, For ornament ; and, with an intelligence which few of his countrymen possess, he seemed both to comprehend and appreciate my meaning. A fanatical Muslem would have cursed them, and a Christian priest would have spit upon them, but this shrewd Druze recognized them as remnants of a more polished and prosperous age.

We continued our walk through a maze of half-ruined buildings within the walls on the south-western side of the city ; and then, climbing over to the outside, I observed that at this point the wall is in a good state of preservation, with towers at intervals. A few hundred yards distant, amid thickets of oak, stand a number of tombs, resembling those at Palmyra. Following the line of the wall, we entered the city again by a gateway, and walked down a paved street. On our left we examined a large private house with a handsome court-yard, having galleries supported on columns. Below this, on the right, is a church, with nave and aisles, separated by ranges of short columns. It is of a late period, and the architecture shows a depraved taste. The columns in the interior appear to have been taken from more ancient structures. We now returned to the sheikh's house, well pleased with our walk.

The evening was spent in lively conversation, in which some of the chief men in the village took part. The sheikh is a man of superior sagacity and intelligence ; he asked eagerly about European manners, and appeared delighted with Nikôla's description of railways and electric telegraphs. He was not satisfied with a mere utterance of "Wullah !" or "Mashullah !" in doubting astonishment, but he questioned us until he got a full explanation of steam and electricity. From mechanics the conversation turned to politics, and now the sheikh, who sat beside me, assumed a confidential

tone, and plied me with questions as to the intentions of the Government about the conscription and the war. It was in vain I pleaded my ignorance of politics, and especially of the intrigues and bribery practised by the authorities in Damascus; still he pressed me to reveal the secret he was confident I possessed. I told him my private opinion was that the war would not be resumed, and that the conscription, in so far as the Druzes were concerned, had been abandoned. By every means in my power I endeavoured to show that I was in no way connected either with the Government of Turkey or England, and had no political object in my present tour: still he would not be persuaded; and the fact that I had brought letters of recommendation from Mr. Wood, their mediator with the Sultan, to all the principal chiefs, tended to make the Druzes suspect I had other purposes in view besides curiosity and anti-quarian zeal.

During the evening we were favoured with a visit from the village schoolmaster, the first I had heard of in the Haurân—a venerable old man, with sparkling eyes and a flowing beard. He was received with great respect, and placed in the “highest seat.” His school, he informed us, consisted of some twenty children; and I had seen them bawling over their lessons on a house-top. He stated, in reply to my questions, that the scholars had no books, and he was obliged to teach them by writing letters and words on little boards, which they carried about and rhymed over till form and sound became familiar. I afterwards saw the little urchins walking through the city, proud of their boards, which were strung round their necks. Here there was a zeal for instruction altogether remarkable. Under such disadvantages, in such times, and with so few inducements to study, it is wonderful that any attention should be given to the subject of education. We regretted the books we had with us were such as would not be acceptable. With all the privileges and opportunities possessed by my countrymen fresh in my memory, I could not but sympathise with these poor children, forced to learn the first principles

of their language from rude letters scratched upon rough boards; and I could not but look with a feeling of respect and admiration on the man who, without remuneration, gave himself up to the self-imposed task of instructing youth. I learned that most of the boys and young men in the village could read, and not a few of them write.

The chief sheikh of the Druze religion resides in Kunawât. I did not see him, but Mr. Quail paid him a visit, and had a long interview. I heard from him that there was nothing in the chief to distinguish him from others of his race, except superior intelligence. He had a few manuscripts ranged round the walls of his room.

During the evening a number of Arabs, natives of these mountains, visited us. They hold a middle place between the Bedawîn and the *Fellakîn*. They live in tents like the former, but they remain stationary like the latter. In the evening all went away except one, whom I recognised as having been among those who were lurking round us at Deir es-Sumeid. With his peculiar ideas and remarks we were much amused, as they tended to illustrate the character and habits of his race. A part of our conversation during the evening may afford the reader some insight into Arab life in this district.

"What brought you to the *Deir* when you saw us there?" I asked him.

"To strip you," he coolly replied.

"And why did you not do it?"

"Because Mahmûd was with you."

"But why would you plunder us? we are strangers, and not your enemies."

"It is our custom."

"And do you strip all strangers?"

"Yes, all we can get hold of."

"And if they resist, or are too strong for you?"

"In the former case we shoot them from behind trees, and in the latter we run."

"How do the people of your tribe live? Do they sow or feed flocks?"

"We are not *fellahîn*, thank God," he said, with dignity. "We keep goats and sheep, hunt partridges and gazelles, and steal!"

"Are you all thieves?"

"Yes, all!"

These answers were given with the greatest composure, and quite as a matter of course. As the evening advanced, the Druzes, who wished to show us every respect, requested the Arab to withdraw; but he stoutly refused, and said he would sleep with the *beggawât*. Our servants also urged him to go, but he treated them with silent contempt. Some of the principal Druzes now seemed inclined to interfere seriously, but I said the man was quite welcome to sleep where he pleased, so far as we were concerned. The sheikh, hearing this, told the others to let him remain, but on retiring we heard him say, with a gentle but emphatic voice, "Take care and do not steal anything from this room." The hint was effectual.

February 4th.—We set out at an early hour to explore the ruins. We first directed our steps to the ravine, crossed the rocky bed of the stream, and walked along its right bank to the theatre I had seen on the previous evening. It is nearly perfect, with the exception of the front wall. It is in a great measure hewn out of the solid rock in the side of the cliff, and faces the W. The spectators thus enjoyed a glorious view. In front rose the rugged side of the ravine, surmounted by the battlemented wall and the mansions of the principal citizens; a little to the right they looked through the vista to the plain, with snow-capped Hermon far beyond.

A short distance above the theatre is a little temple, erected over a fountain with a *jet d'eau*. Steps hewn in the rock lead up to the ruins of a massive tower, apparently of an earlier age than the Roman rule in Syria. Within it are several stone doors of great beauty, with panels, fretted mouldings, and bas-reliefs of flowers and fruit. In one of them I observed a place for a lock, and also a keyhole! A short distance eastward are the lower walls of a circular

tower of high antiquity, 84 feet in circumference. In the distance I saw several other round towers.

These ancient towers occupy a commanding position on the summit of the cliff overhanging the ravine ; and from them my eye wandered over one of the most beautiful panoramas in Syria. From many spots amid the mountain-peaks of Lebanon and Antilebanon I have looked upon wilder and grander scenes : standing on the old castle above Palmyra, ruins more extensive and buildings far more magnificent lay at my feet ; from the crumbling walls of the Temple of the Sun at Bâ'albek I saw prouder monuments of man's power, and more exquisite memorials of his genius ; but never before in Syria had I gazed upon a scene which nature and art had so combined to beautify. It is not the savage grandeur of Lebanon, with frowning cliffs and snow-capped summits ; nor is it the flat and featureless Bâ'albek, with its Cyclopean walls and aerial columns ; nor is it the desolation of Palmyra, whose white ruins are strewn over a barren plain, without a lichen or a bramble to relieve the whiteness. Here are hill and vale, wooded slopes and secluded glens, frowning cliffs with battlemented summits, moss-grown ruins, and groups of columns, springing up from the dense foliage of the oaks of Bashan. Hitherto I had been struck with the nakedness of Syrian ruins. Fallen columns are half buried in dust, sculptured pediments lie on the gravelly soil ; and, graceful though the columns are, and rich the fretwork that adorns frieze and cornice, yet, as pictures, they contrast poorly with the ivy-mantled abbeys of England, or the moss-grown castles of the Rhine. Here, however, the scene is changed. The fresh foliage hides all defects, and enhances the beauty of portico and massive wall, while luxuriant creepers twine round the pillars, and wreath themselves among the volutes of the capitals.

As we stood and looked almost spell-bound, the hill-sides around were suddenly filled with life, and the glens and vales resounded with the cry of shepherds and the bleatings of flocks led off to pasture. Each shepherd carried his little skin of provisions, doubtless a counterpart of the ancient

scrip, and his pitcher of water, while across his shoulders was slung his firelock—that indispensable companion in this land of strife. The shepherds had none of that peaceful aspect generally associated with pastoral life and habits: they were wild and savage-looking, especially the Arabs. The countenances of the Druzes, however fierce and stern, relaxed into a smile as they passed us; but the Arabs scowled upon us, and every glance seemed to say, "If we had you half an hour distant from the Druzes you would feel our power." Their equipment was formidable. In addition to the long gun, most of them carried a battle-axe, while in the belt were pistols and a dagger.

After breakfast Mr. Barnett and I resumed our researches. Leaving him to copy inscriptions, I proceeded alone to the temples on the summit of the ridge, and here, while examining the ruins and endeavouring to make a plan of the group of buildings, I observed four Arabs creeping stealthily toward me from behind a grove of oak-trees. I was alone, unarmed, and at least a quarter of a mile from inhabited dwellings, and I had little doubt these men intended to try to rob me and then effect their escape. I knew they dare not fire upon me; so, taking a hasty glance at the nature of the ground, and not appearing to notice them, I climbed to the top of the wall, and walked along it for a short distance full in their view, as if intending to retrace my steps to the small temple. I reached a broken part not easily passable, and descended to the inside, observing as I went down that the Arabs had changed their course, and were now fast moving toward the breach in the wall at the temple. As soon as I was out of sight, a few seconds led me across the hippodrome and over the ridge of stones, and then, winding among the underwood and scaling some walls, I was soon sitting quietly on the top of a house in view of half a dozen Druzes in a neighbouring court. Taking out my portfolio, I sat down to sketch the temple, which stood out in bold relief from the background of a wooded hill. While thus engaged, I was a good deal amused by my friends the Arabs, gliding

like cats from bush to bush, and at last, when sufficiently near, making a simultaneous dash at the temple door. Great was their surprise when they found I was not there, and it was greater still when they saw me quietly looking at them from the distance.

Mr. Barnett having come up with several Druzes, we proceeded together to the palace, as it is now called. The only apartments distinguishable are three. The first is not in its original state, the western door being of a later date than the building itself. The front door has been walled up, and the interior refitted for a church. On the western door is a profusion of sculpture, consisting of wreaths and fruit, but in bad taste. Several crosses appear in various places. On the N. is a portico of the Corinthian order. The columns have brackets for statues, like those at Palmyra. The length of this building is 98 feet, and its breadth 69. Adjoining it, on the E., is a hall of great beauty, with a Corinthian portico of six columns. The arrangement of these two buildings is singular, the portico of the second receding a few feet from the line of the former. The pediment, which the six columns once supported, lies in ruins, and I was able to examine closely the sculpture of the frieze and cornice. It is boldly executed, with figures of satyrs, encompassed by wreaths of flowers and bunches of grapes. The front wall is prostrate. The interior is 81 feet long by 69 wide, and a colonnade encircles it at the distance of 11 feet from the wall. The columns have square plain capitals, with the exception of two at each end before the doors, which are Corinthian. On each side is a small gallery, in the thickness of the wall, with triple arches in front resting on two short pillars.

Another large hall is joined to this by a door on the S. side. This door is one of the richest and most beautiful I have seen. The architrave and sides are elaborately ornamented with the cornucopia, surrounded by wreaths of leaves, flowers, and bunches of grapes. On the soffit is a Greek cross, but apparently inserted at a later period. The

hall is 84 feet in length, with a semicircular apse 15 feet deep at the southern end. The breadth I could not determine, on account of the heaps of rubbish. Two ranges of columns, seven in each range, ran down each side; they have plain square capitals, but the cornice over them is richly ornamented. On each side of this hall are massive foundations of other apartments; but the ground is now so encumbered with blocks of stone and thickets of underwood that I was not able to make a plan.

We could discover no inscription or other memorial to throw light on the history of this noble pile, or on the object for which it was intended. It struck me at the time that the whole of the buildings which crown this ridge may be attributed to one individual. The palace, with its spacious paved esplanade, reservoirs, and halls; the temple near it, and the hippodrome, with its numerous statues,—these, with the smaller buildings grouped together in and around the area, appear to have constituted parts of one magnificent establishment. The site was admirably selected: on the S. and E. are glens, valleys, and mountain-peaks covered with verdure; toward the W. and N. is the wide expanse of plain, shut in in the distance by the ranges of Antilebanon and Hermon.

The small temple W. of the palace is of beautiful workmanship. There is an oblong cell with *antæ*, having two columns between; and in front four beautiful Corinthian columns supporting a pediment. The columns stand, and are about 34 feet high, and 3 feet 6 inches in diameter.

In the open area in front I observed several fragments of sculptured figures, among others that of a lioness. Near this is a colossal head in relief; the face is broad and the cheeks large. The eyes are soft and well formed, but the forehead is low, and the brows prominent and contracted. On the forehead is a *crescent*, with rays shooting upwards; the face is encircled with thick tresses. The mouth and chin are broken away. The appearance is very striking. It struck me at the time that this was probably intended to represent *Ashtaroth*, the goddess worshipped

by the Syrian nations, and by the Arabs before the time of Mohammed. We learn from the Scriptures that the country beyond Jordan, and especially Bashan, was addicted to the worship of Ashtaroth from the earliest ages. One of its principal cities was called *Ashtaroth-Karnaim*—that is, “Ashtaroth of the *two horns*, or *crescent*,” and this city was one of the capitals of the kingdom of Bashan at the Exodus. It is, consequently, highly interesting to find in Kenath,

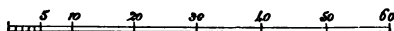
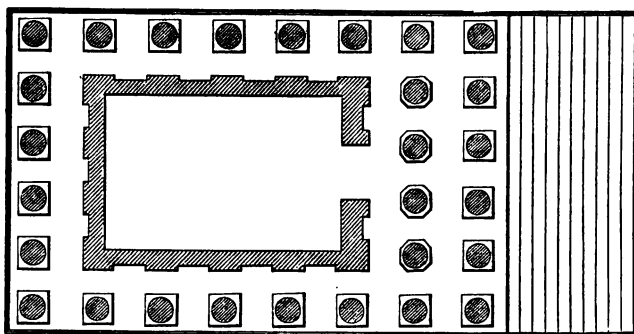


Head of Ashtaroth.

one of the most ancient cities of Bashan, monumental evidence of the worship of Ashtaroth.

Having completed our survey, we walked over piles of rubbish intermixed with broken columns, inside the western wall. The path led us through a court in which several Druze women were sitting at work. They covered the lower part of their faces as we approached. While I was drinking a bowl of water, which one of them handed me, I observed them all rise and embrace a little boy who followed in our train; and each woman, as she kissed

him, burst into tears, and uttered the words, "May God preserve thee, O my son!" Astonished at this, I inquired the cause, and was informed that his father had fallen in battle, and that his mother had been shot by the Turkish soldiers while attempting to carry away the body of her husband! Poor boy! he had early felt the sorrows of his wretched country, and the brutality of its rulers. When we had gone away some distance, I put a piece of money in his hand; he looked at me for a moment in astonishment, and then at the shining coin, and, shutting his hand firmly, ran



Scale of Feet.

Plan of Peripteral Temple at Kunawât.

back to the women. As I scaled the crumbling walls I could hear their voices imploring blessings on the head of the *beg* who pitied the poor orphan.

A walk of ten minutes down terraced slopes brought us to a wooded vale, in which stands one of the most beautiful buildings of Kenath—a peripteral temple erected on a platform about 12 feet high. The interior of the platform has crypt-like chambers, with massive piers supporting the vaulted roof. The cell of the temple is 45 feet long by 30 wide, with pilasters along the walls. In front, towards the E., was a portico of two rows of columns, six in each row;

and round the sides ran a range of columns corresponding to those in the outer line of the portico. All the pillars stand upon pedestals 6 feet high, and the height of the order is about 36 feet. The capitals are Corinthian, and finely executed. Each column seems to have had a short inscription on its base.

The situation of the temple is very beautiful. The sides of the vale have a gentle slope, and are thickly wooded. On the E. are the walls of the city, and over them rise wooded heights, crowned with ruins and round towers. Westward there is an easy declivity to the plain, and here the ruins of 'Atîl may be seen amid dense foliage.

Such are the ruins of Kenath, and my reader will agree with me that there are few sites in Syria which surpass it in the extent and importance of its monuments. It is not, like some of the other cities we have visited, without a name or a history; its annals, though few, date back more than 3000 years, and for nearly 2000 it ranked among the principal cities of Bashan.

The identity of *Kunawât* with the Hebrew KENATH and Greek *Canatha*, is established beyond the possibility of doubt. The analogy of the names is sufficient to suggest the strong probability of the places being the same. Seetzen discovered a fragment of an inscription, containing the name of the city. The situation, too, has been described with accuracy by several writers. But there is another argument proving the identity of Kunawât and Canatha. In the Peutinger Tables are the following names and distances :—

Damaspo.	
Aenos . .	xxvii.
Chanata . .	xxxvii.

Damaspo is either a mistake for Damasco, or an abridgment of *Damas polis*; but no one has yet succeeded, so far as I know, in identifying *Aenos*. On the northern border of the Lejah are the ruins of a large town, called Musmeih; from inscriptions on its monuments it appears that its ancient name was *Phaenos*, and that it was the *capital* of

Trachonitis. It is identical, as will hereafter be shown, with the ecclesiastical city Phenutus. It will be seen at a glance that *Phaenos* may have been written *Aenos* by a careless transcriber, or that the first letter may have been obliterated by accident. From Damascus to Phaenos *traces of a Roman road still exist*, and the distance accords precisely with that given on the Peutinger Tables—27 *Roman miles*. Now, from Phaenos to Kunawât there is also a Roman road, through the midst of the Lejah, and the distance is 37 *Roman miles*.

The city of Kenath was chief among the walled towns which Jair conquered in the land of Argob, and added to the territories of the half-tribe of Manasseh; and more than 2000 years after that period it was still flourishing, and ranked by Hierocles among the episcopal cities of Arabia.

The first mention of Kenath is when the Israelites subdued Og, the giant king of Bashan, and took possession of his kingdom: "Nobah went and took *Kenath*, with the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name." It is probable that Nobah was a son of Jair, who took Kenath and all the region of Argob. The latter gave his name to the whole conquered province, while the former only gave his name to the one city. Kenath remained one of the most important cities of Bashan down to the period of the Mohammedan conquest, when it fell gradually to ruin.



Ruins of Bozrah.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM KUNAWÂT TO BUSRAH.

Primitive telescope — Tower-tombs — Druze revenge — Ruins of 'Atfl — Singular monument — Description of Suweideh and its ruins — Sheikh Wâked el-Hamdân — An evening party — History of Suweideh — Plain of Auranitis — Tell Kuleib — Visit to 'Ary — Druze hospitality — The Kings of Ghussân — Approach to BOZRAH — Ancient cities — Rhose of the Peutinger Tables identified — Plan and description of the ruins of Bozrah — Site of Beth-gamul — Beautiful theatre — Boheira the monk, and Mohammed the Prophet.

HISTORY OF BOZRAH.—*The Bozrah of Moab distinct from that of Edom — The ancient gigantic inhabitants — The Bostrian era.*

WHILE I stood waiting till the baggage was arranged, my friend the sheikh came to me with an old telescope, and asked what such an one would cost when new. On examining the instrument I was surprised at its construction, and inquired how he came by it. He said he had taken it from an officer of Ibrahim Pasha's army during the Druze war, but that it had been broken in the conflict. He, however, having studied its shape and length, took out

the glasses and made a tube of paper. Time and rough usage had dimmed and scratched the glasses, and he wished to obtain another like it. He said he was short-sighted, and it would be of great service to him if he could see as well as his neighbours. I promised to try and procure one for him if he would come to me at Damascus.

Nikôla endeavoured to persuade him to accept of some remuneration for the expense he had been put to in entertaining us; but he refused to take a para! We resolved not to leave without paying in some way, and, when the sheikh refused, Nikôla gave the *bakhshîsh* to the old man who presided at the coffee.

At 1.30 we left Kunawât, and, sending our servants by the direct road, we rode up to the tower-tombs. The buildings are square, and have two and three stories. The doors and windows are small, and within are recesses for bodies, similar to those at Palmyra. It is remarkable that Burckhardt found in this city an inscription in Palmyrene. Our path was narrow and tortuous, winding among thickets of oaks, with ruins here and there shooting up over the foliage. Soon afterwards we fell into the line of the Roman highway, and followed it to Suweideh.

As we rode over the stony path we overtook a Druze, with his gun upon one shoulder and a little child astride the other. Mahmûd lifted the child beside him upon his horse. It is one pleasing trait of these people that they are united, one and all of them, by the closest ties of brotherhood. They have seldom disputes among themselves, and in war they fight as one man. In their dealings with each other they are, so far as I have been able to ascertain, honest and honourable. It may serve to illustrate the strong feelings they entertain on this point, if I record an incident which Mahmûd related to me as I entered Kunawât. When passing over the bridge that spans the torrent, he directed my attention to a flat rock, on which was a heap of stones. Two Druzes, he said, were going to Damascus, one of whom had a large sum of money on his person. His companion attempted to rob him; he resisted, but fell

pierced to the heart by a dagger. When intelligence of the crime was conveyed to Kunawât, a band went out in pursuit of the murderer, and after months of search found him lurking amid the glens of Lebanon. He was taken to his native village, and there, upon that rock, was bound; a heap of wood was piled round him, a torch applied, and he was burned to ashes in the presence of his people! This is an illustration, not of the way in which Druzes will punish crime, simply as such, but of the vengeance they are sure to take on the man who dares to break the ties of brotherhood. Another circumstance came under my notice while staying at Kunawât, which shows that the Druzes look lightly on murder when the victim is of another faith. I observed in the sheikh's house a Druze from Shuweifât, in Lebanon, whose name Nikôla recognised; and it recalled to my mind an event that had occurred two years before, while I was on a visit at Shumlân. A Christian was murdered near that village, his only offence being that he was a member of a family with whom a sect of the Druzes had a blood feud. The murderers fled, and had little difficulty in evading the law. We now recognised in this respectable-looking man the chief actor in that deed of blood. Those among whom he lives treat him with all respect, though he is no less guilty than he whom they burned on the rock in the valley.

After an hour's ride we emerged from the oak forest upon an open stony slope, and saw *Suweideh* before us on the summit of a low ridge. A ravine separated us from its ruins, on reaching the brow of which I gave our letter of introduction to Mahmûd, to deliver to the sheikh, while we galloped down to examine a building on the right. In two minutes we were beside one of the most singular monuments in this country. It is a cubical structure of fine masonry, about 12 yards on each side, and nearly 30 feet high. On each side are six Doric semi-columns, supporting a plain frieze and cornice, and between them are coats of mail, shields, and helmets in relief. On the north side, near the eastern angle, about 6 feet from the ground, is an

inscription in Greek to the following effect: "Odainatus, son of Annelos, built this monument to *Chamrate* his wife." I did not see any other inscription, nor did Mr. Barnett, though we both examined it with care. I have since observed that it also contains an inscription in Palmyrene characters, and it is remarkable that the name Odainatus is one that occurs frequently on the monuments of Palmyra, and this too was the name of the celebrated husband of the still more celebrated Zenobia.

The ravine called Wady Suweideh runs between this building and the city. The winter torrent that flows through it is spanned by a Roman bridge of a single arch. Crossing it, we rode up the opposite bank, along an ancient road, to a large reservoir, on the far side of which the ruins commence. We went to the sheikh's house, but found he was absent. Being ushered into the reception-room, preparations were made for serving coffee. Large logs of green wood were heaped upon the scanty embers, but before they could be fanned into a flame the apartment was filled with smoke. Politeness required that we should keep our seats, but smarting eyes *compelled* us to run. We sat down outside the door, but no coffee was brought,—the people were offended. After waiting half an hour we proposed a walk among the ruins, and the sheikh's son, a fine boy of fourteen, splendidly dressed, with a silver-mounted dagger in his belt, undertook to be our guide. The first place we examined was a peristyle beside the sheikh's house. The columns are clumsy, and the Corinthian capitals in bad taste; the cornice too is poor, and is not uniform, and even the columns are of different dimensions and workmanship. The edifice was constructed of more ancient materials.

Near this building runs a long straight street, which intersects the city. At the upper end are the remains of a Roman gate, and some distance below it is a fine building in the shape of a half-moon, which was probably connected with an aqueduct. On it is an inscription, with the name of Trajan and the date A.D. 103. This is important, as proving that the cities of this region do not owe their origin

to the Romans, but were populous and opulent from a much earlier age : indeed the architecture of the principal dwelling-houses is manifestly not borrowed from either Greeks or Romans, but is peculiar to this district.

We turned westward down the slope on which the city is built, and, after climbing over heaps of rubbish and hewn stones, descended into the area of a large church, the roof of which has fallen. In the east end is a semicircular apse, and in the walls on each side are ranges of arched windows. Columns, capitals, and fragments of fallen cornices, richly sculptured, encumber the interior, and without are heaps of ruins, bearing testimony to the wealth and taste of former days. From its size and decorations we may conclude that it was a cathedral, but now the sanctuary is waste, and the rank grass grows over the neglected tombs of those that sleep within its walls. Even the church itself was constructed of more ancient materials. We pursued our course, winding among ruins ;—ruins, nothing but ruins, and desolation, and faded grandeur, and present misery, and filth, met our view. The modern habitations are the lower stories of the ancient houses, and the whole surface has become so deeply covered with the fallen structures, that most of the people seem to be residing in caves. It is only in these subterranean dwellings that one can now see the primeval architecture of Bashan. The Greek, Roman, and Christian buildings which were erected beside, and sometimes over them, have fallen to ruin, and almost buried the more ancient.

Some thirty or forty boys, with a fair sprinkling of men, followed us, shouting and dancing in high glee round the Franks, the first probably many of them had seen. It was only the repeated threats of the sheikh's son, accompanied occasionally by a volley of stones, that kept them from so crowding upon us as to stop farther progress. As we passed the houses, portly women and coy girls peeped at us with one eye over white veils, and laughingly pointed out to each other some wondrous oddity about our dress : our hats, or *kettles*, as they persisted in calling them,

attracted most attention; in fact we created as great a sensation as a party of Arabs, with flowing robes and voluminous turbans, would do in a provincial town in England; and I am not sure but that, had we ourselves been transported to a retired English village as we now stood, we would have had a fair share of popularity there also.

On our way through the lower part of the city we saw some Christian Arab women weaving hair-cloth tents. The webs are made of whatever length may be needed, and then three or four are sewed together; thus the tent is formed. We were told here, as we had also been at Hīt and Shūhba, that the principal Druze families had tents of hair ready in their houses, so that, in case the Government should renew the war, and defeat them, they would leave their habitations, and adopt a wandering life, rather than submit to the conscription. These females were the handsomest I had seen in Haurân; their features are regular and even beautiful, and the rich brown complexion and lustrous black eyes give an inexpressible charm to their appearance. The under lips are stained a deep blue, like those of the Bedawy women; and their hands and arms are also tattooed with a profusion of crosses, saints, and angels.

Near this place we entered a large mosque, the roof of which was supported upon columns taken from older and more tasteful structures. The interior is encumbered with heaps of ruins.

A short distance E. of the mosque is a small building of good masonry, considerably lower than the surrounding ruins. I thought at first it was a fountain, but on descending could see nothing that would confirm the supposition. On a large stone over a door is an inscription in very small characters, and from which it appears that certain individuals whose names are given erected a temple and statues to the goddess Minerva. The date is fixed by the statement that it was during the consulate of *Domitius Dexter*; and also by the fact that M. Aurelius Antoninus

was Cæsar. We know that in the fourth year of the Emperor Severus he conferred the title of Cæsar on his son Bassianus, whom he called M. Aurel. Antoninus, afterwards better known by the name *Caracalla*; and in the same year Domitius Dexter was consul. The date is therefore A.D. 196.

The ancient city was erected on the summit and southern declivity of a narrow ridge, and the building above referred to stands at its base. We now ascended a steep bank to the summit, and found a reservoir, not less than 100 yards in diameter and from 30 to 40 feet deep. It is filled by a subterranean canal, coming from the wady E. of the city. Around this are the principal habitations of the present residents. A little N. of the reservoir the ground begins to descend abruptly to Wady Suweideh. In the sides of the ravine are caves, which, we were informed, are large and difficult of access. From the top of the ridge we got a good view of the extent and character of the ruins. They are far inferior in interest to those at Kunawât, but they are much more extensive. I estimated the circumference at about four miles. A Roman road runs past the western end of the city: it is the continuation of that which comes from *Phæno*. A branch strikes off at Süleim to Kunawât; but the main line continues direct from Süleim to Suweideh, and thence to Busrah.

On returning to the sheikh's house we found the principal men of the village assembled. They received us with respect, but not with the cordiality we had been accustomed to. Mahmûd sat apart apparently dissatisfied; we, however, cared little so long as we were permitted to walk about and examine the ruins. We were beginning to think seriously of ordering our servants to prepare dinner, when a cry was raised that the sheikh had arrived. Looking up we saw him approach on a splendid white mare, dressed in a scarlet robe and white turban; but unattended and unarmed. We rose with the rest, and after the usual salutations I presented our letter of introduction. After glancing over its contents he handed it to his secretary and ordered him to read it

aloud. The scene was now changed ; every countenance was lighted up with the smile of welcome. Excuses and apologies without number were made ; and we could well excuse them for entertaining doubts about strangers visiting their village at such a time, examining every feature of the ruins and of the surrounding country, and asking all kinds of questions. It would not have been very wonderful if we had met the same reception we afterwards got from the fanatical Muslems of Edrei.

Sheikh *Wâked el-Hamdân* is of the noblest family in the Haurân, and is the first in point of rank among the Druze chiefs. The family of Hamdân is originally from the village of 'Ain 'Anûb in Lebanon, but has been settled in Suweideh more than half a century. The present sheikh, the head of the family, is about 45 years of age, of small stature and spare form. His face is expressive and his features regular and noble ; he has a prominent Roman nose, small compressed lips, penetrating eyes, and a long black beard. His voice is soft and almost drawling ; but his words are uttered with a slowness and precision that show they have been duly weighed. He has the reputation of being sage in council, and brave and skilful, though not of great personal prowess, in the field. He took an active part in the late war.

As the evening wore on the large reception-room was filled with villagers and strangers. A Bedawy presided at the coffee, and entertained us with stirring tales of desert life and warfare. He was of the tribe Shammâr, and came to Syria with the army of Ibrahim Pasha ; having been taken prisoner by the Druzes during the Haurân campaign, he never returned to his native country. It is well known that the Shammâr were the flower of Ibrahim's cavalry ; none excelled them in horsemanship and bravery in the field. I inquired if there were any poets in his tribe ; he replied that there were many, and after some persuasion repeated a few of their choice stanzas. The Arab poets in general describe the feats of warriors, or favourite mares of their tribe, in short sentences consisting of two or four

measures, which are sometimes of great beauty ; and, from the boldness of their imagery, cannot fail to excite admiration. There is another species of rhyme they often try, and in which some are adepts ; but it is difficult for those who are ignorant of the peculiar structure of the Arabic language to understand its character. They take one word, generally the name of a chief or warrior, and, by changing its form, describe a series of acts or feats in arms, each different act being expressed by a different inflexion of the radical word. One word will thus occur six or eight times, with the addition of a prefix, or a suffix, or the insertion of an intermediate letter, or the change of a vowel-point ; and each inflexion conveys a new meaning. This, when skilfully constructed, is highly popular ; and not unfrequently sentences thus framed are given as puzzles. The warlike achievements of a favourite chief are often described by the inflexion of his own name. The evening passed pleasantly in conversation about poetry and poets, and in reciting choice pieces from the writings and traditional sayings of some of the greatest of Arab authors.

February 5th.—This morning dawned gloomy and threatening. A thunderstorm, accompanied by rain and lightning, had passed over the place during the night ; and now low dark clouds swept the ground and enveloped the mountains. The air was cold, and smart showers made it feel colder. We resolved, however, to prosecute our journey. It had been originally our plan to go from Suweideh to Kureiyeh, and there to spend Sunday ; but we now thought it best to proceed to Busrah. The kindness and hospitality of the Druzes were so great that we felt it would be impossible to enjoy the rest and quietness we desired for the coming day while in one of their villages. In Busrah there are no Druzes, and we understood that a few Christian families had taken up their residence there ; but in this we were disappointed.

I walked out with Mr. Barnett to see a long inscription on a rock some distance from the sheikh's house. On our way we passed several ancient foundations and heaps of

hewn stones, and saw a few tower-tombs like those at Kunawât. On reaching the rock I observed that one side had been cut away, and upon it a human figure had been sculptured; but it is so much broken that the features are not discernible. Below the figure is the inscription which has already been published in Burckhardt's 'Travels.'

There is no city in the Haurân which surpasses Suweideh in the extent of its ruins, and yet, strange to say, no clue has been found to its ancient name: and there is no mention of it in history previous to the era of the crusades. I have already said that there can be little doubt it was an episcopal city, and it was, therefore, probably one of those to which new names were given by the Romans when they were rebuilt or adorned; but after the decline of Roman power the old names were resumed and the new forgotten. There are several Roman names among the ecclesiastical cities of Arabia; and two of them, Neapolis and Philippopolis, have been identified—the former by ourselves, the latter by Burckhardt.

Suweideh has suffered more from time and the accidents of war than any other city in Bashan. It has been ruined and built, and re-ruined and re-built; so that it is not possible to form any correct idea of its ancient state. Inscriptions found in it, and already referred to, show that it was a flourishing town previous to the Roman conquest in A.D. 105; and that it was celebrated for commercial enterprise down to the middle of the fourth century. Abulfeda states that the castle of Suweideh was erected by an Arab chief, called N'amân, some centuries before the Mohammedan conquest. The hill-sides around the town are terraced, and the country bears marks of former careful cultivation. The declivities of the mountains are admirably adapted for the growth of the vine and the olive, and the plain along their base still bears crops of grain, whose luxuriance is proverbial. The people are robust and vigorous, and their appearance indicates a salubrious climate. It is remarkable that a tradition related by William

of Tyre regarding Bildad, the friend of Job, is still preserved by the people of Suweideh, who add that Job himself was king of Bathanyeh.

Suweideh has been for many years the acknowledged capital of Jebel ed-Druze, and the residence of their principal sheikh. It is one of the most populous villages in the district. The Druzes and Christians live on amicable terms, but there are no Muslems.

We left Suweideh at 9 o'clock, and rode down the stony slope on the S. In seven minutes we had on the right a building called Deir es-Senân, situated on a low mound; and a few minutes afterwards we entered the plain of Haurân, which stretched away unbroken to the base of Hermon. It has a deep-black loamy soil, in general free from stones and gravel, but round the base of the tells, which occur at intervals, are fragments of porous lava, intermixed with rock of a firmer texture. The mountain-range of Bathanyeh, or Jebel Haurân, as it is more generally called by strangers, rises on its eastern side by easy slopes. Suweideh is situated about the centre of the range on a projecting spur, and at this place the chain attains its greatest breadth. The conical peak of *Kuleib* was now in view, and presented a beautiful appearance, rising a graceful cone over the neighbouring hills; its sides smooth and regular, and covered with oak forests. The name of this mountain, as given by Burckhardt and all others, with the exception of Buckingham, is *Kelb*, "dog," or *Kuleib*, the diminutive of the same word. It is strange that Burckhardt should have made such a mistake, for he was well acquainted with the Arabic language. The real name of the hill is *Kuleib*, probably the diminutive of *Kalb*, "the heart."

At 9.35 we passed Mujeidel, inhabited by a few families; and we observed, about twenty minutes on the right, a building, called Deir et-Tureifeh. Continuing in the same course over the rich plain, we crossed a shallow wady, with a stream flowing westward, whose source is in the mountains near Raha. A heavy shower now began to fall, and a strong

wind blowing in our faces made us feel its full force. Several times my horse wheeled round, and refused to advance against the bitter blast and cold rain. We saw on our right, nearly an hour distant, the village of Kenâkir; and on the left, two miles off, Resâs; while on a lofty tell beyond it stood the fortress-like village of Sehweh. We soon afterwards passed another stream. Immediately after crossing it we began to ascend an easy slope that leads to a rocky hill, on the summit and southern declivity of which stands the large village of 'Ary, where we arrived at 10.40. We had ridden fast, and our servants were far behind; we consequently went up to the side of a castle-like building on the top of the tell to await their arrival, and obtain a view of the country. The Druze sheikh, however, with half a dozen of his retainers, was soon with us, and carried us off by force to partake of his hospitality. He is brother to Wâked of Suweideh, and son of the man of whom Burckhardt speaks so highly. As soon as we sat down, fresh charcoal was thrown upon the embers and coffee prepared, and, while this duty was attended to, other preparations were being made. The cackling of remonstrant chickens first attracted our notice; then a running to and fro with pans and dishes; and lastly, a woman, entering the apartment, took a large supply of flour from a sack and poured water upon it. We now understood that a feast was in preparation, and we resolved, if possible, to prevent it. We were aware of the despatch of Arab cookery, yet we had no wish to waste time which might be more profitably spent amid the ruins of Busrah; we, therefore, interposed at once, and, after much talk and protestations from Nikôla concerning the great value of our time, and the pain it gave us to leave them so soon, and our imperishable regard for the whole Druze race, and especially the noble family of Hamdân, we succeeded in persuading them that we really meant to go on to Busrah; and thus fortunately saved the poor hens till the arrival of some other guest.

'Ary was once a town of considerable extent, the ruins being above a mile in circumference; but there are no

buildings remaining of any importance, and there are no traces of wealth or splendour. The ancient name of the place is unknown, but it may *possibly* be identical with the *Ariath* of ecclesiastical history. The tell, on which it is situated, is in the plain, nearly an hour from the western base of the mountains.

We left 'Ary at 11.30, and, having learned that our servants had gone on, we set out at a rapid pace towards Mujeimir, which now appeared before us on the eastern declivity of a tell. The valley of 'Ary extends on the left to the base of the mountains, about three miles distant, and on its southern side is a low ridge of rocky mounds, a spur from the main chain, extending a considerable distance into the plain, and shutting in the view. We reached Mujeimir in twenty minutes; the houses are of stone and of considerable antiquity. We were disappointed in not finding our servants here, as we had been told they were awaiting us; but we supposed they had followed the main road to Busrah, which runs on the western side of the tell. We rode on without dismounting, and, after passing the houses, commenced to ascend the ridge. At 12.30 we reached the village of Wetr, situated on its summit. Some distance to the S.E. we observed the much more extensive ruins of Ghassân on a tell. Abulfeda mentions a tribe of Arabs which came from Yeman, in southern Arabia, to this country, several centuries before Mohammed, whose chiefs were called *Melûk Ghassân*, "Kings of Ghassân." They probably took their name from this place. It was one of them who erected the castle of Suweideh.

The vast plain southward now opened before us, dotted with deserted cities and villages. That broad black belt in front, with the minarets, towers, and battlements, is Busrah. Jemurrîn, Keires, Burd, Ghûsam, and others, are seen on each side; while on the summit of a hill on the eastern horizon is the castle of Sulkhad, and in the intervening valley are the wide-spread remains of Kureiyeh.

We found our servants, and sent them along the road to Busrah; while we, turning to the right, galloped across

cultivated fields to a large building called Deir Zubeir. We reached it in ten minutes. It is a square structure, with thick stone walls, and has probably been used, as its name would seem to imply, as a convent. Around it are a few ancient houses, with stone doors and roofs, but now deserted. From hence we rode towards Jemurrîn, lying between us and Busrah. Soon after leaving the Deir we struck the Roman road. The pavement is in places quite perfect, and the line of the road, extending across the plain straight as an arrow, is clearly marked. This is the road laid down in the Peutinger Tables. The next station after Chanata is *Rhose*, and the distance between the two places is *twenty miles*; the distance of Busrah from Kunawât is exactly *twenty Roman miles*. It is easy to understand how the carelessness of a transcriber or the ignorance of a copyist might make *Rhose* out of *Bostra*.

Following the Roman road for fifteen minutes we reached the brow of Wady Zêdy, a deep, narrow ravine, running across the plain like a huge fissure. In the bottom is a small stream flowing lazily over its rocky bed. A Roman bridge of three arches spans it, crossing which we rode up to Jemurrîn, situated on a rising ground on the south bank of the wady. It is of considerable extent, and contains the ruins of some handsome buildings. A square tower beside the bridge was the first that attracted our notice from its resemblance to the tombs in Kunawât.

Leaving Jemurrîn we followed the road which leads to the eastern side of Busrah; a few minutes' gallop brought us up to our servants, and at 1.40 we stood beside the ruins. The distance from 'Ary is a little over six miles. Our first object was to procure a house, or some apartment we could call our own, for the approaching Sunday. Mahmûd engaged a small room in the sheikh's house, where our baggage was stowed away and arrangements made for ourselves. The people we met, though not actually uncivil, showed us no attention or kindness. We resolved to be on our guard, but to take no notice of incivility; and we engaged the brother of the sheikh to guide us over the

ruins. This we deemed necessary to save us from insolence and abuse.

In form the *walled* city was almost rectangular; as nearly as I could estimate, a mile and a quarter in length, by about a mile in breadth. Without the walls, on the E., N., and especially the W., were large suburbs. Near the north-western angle are the ruins of the mosque called *el-Mabrâk*, from the following circumstance. The Khâlif Othman, when marching with his army and approaching Busrah, commanded that a mosque should be erected on the spot on which his camel might kneel. This was the spot; and here are still the ruins of the mosque.

A straight street intersects the city lengthwise. The N. and S. walls are nearly parallel to it; and the E. and W. at right angles. Another street crosses it at right angles, at a point E. of the centre; and the most important buildings were clustered round the place of intersection. The lines of many other streets can be traced; and from these it appears the city was constructed with great regularity. The general plan reminded me of Shühba.

On leaving the sheikh's court-yard, I observed, and copied, a beautiful inscription over the gateway which leads into the street; on stones at the side of the street near this spot I saw two others: but none of them possess any historical interest. Turning westward along the street, here covered with the *débris* of fallen houses, we reached the ruins of a temple, only a fragment of which stands: it consisted of an oblong cell with three ranges of niches in the front wall. The two exterior columns of the portico occupy their places; they are only 3 feet in diameter, though their height cannot be much under 50 feet. They stand on pedestals, and have plinths of white marble. The capitals are Corinthian and profusely decorated, as well as the architrave and cornice that connect one of them with the wall of the cell. The building and columns are out of proportion, and show a depraved taste: it occupies one of the angles formed by the intersection of the main streets. In front of it, on the opposite angle, are four Corinthian

columns of admirable proportions. The capitals are perfect, but there is no trace of the structure they were connected with.

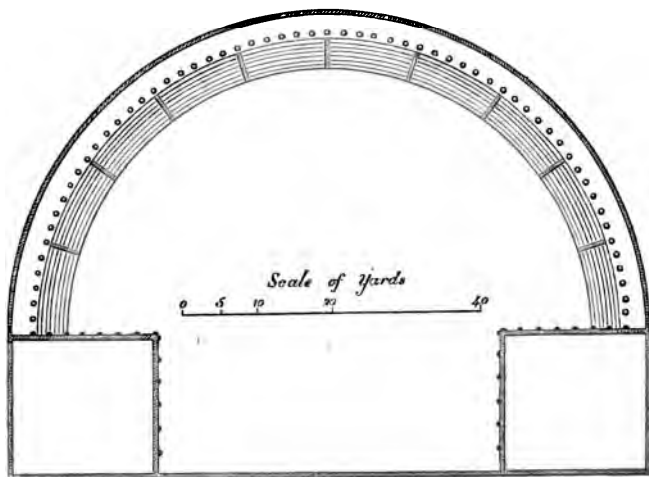
Proceeding westward along the street we observed a large bath on our left. A short distance beyond it is a triumphal arch, in good preservation. It has three arches a large central and two side ones; it is intersected longitudinally by an arched passage, so that it appears to be resting on square piers. The dimensions are 40 feet in length by 20 in breadth, and about 40 in height. It has pilasters at the angles, and niches for statues on each side.

We now turned southward, and, passing over heaps of ruins, crossed the city walls and walked to the castle. It is of great extent and strength, and the outer walls are almost perfect. In masonry and plan it resembles the castle of Damascus, and, like it, it is encompassed by deep moats, the water for which can be drawn from a large tank. In form it is a parallelogram, with towers at the angles and sides. The entrance is on the E., in a deep recess; and the approach is by a paved road over the fosse. Underneath are immense reservoirs for water, and vaulted magazines. After passing through a court-yard we ascended the great tower at the N.W. angle, from which we obtained a commanding view over the ruins and plain. From hence our guide conducted us, through suites of vaulted chambers and corridors, to the south-western tower, which is the loftiest in the castle. The country on the S. and S.E. is dotted with deserted cities and villages. Among others I saw Um el-Jemâl, the identity of which with BETH-GAMUL has been suggested by Dr. Smith; and there cannot be much doubt of the correctness of his supposition. The plain extends to the horizon; and the soil, so far as one can judge from the distance, is similar to that farther N., rich and fertile; while the ruins prove that it was at one time densely populated.

After leaving this tower, we came unexpectedly on one of the most interesting ruins of Busrah—a theatre of great extent. It is raised upon piers and groined arches, like

the crypt of a cathedral. This splendid monument was so constructed that the spectators had, as a background to the scenic representations of the stage, the buildings of the city, and the plain beyond, terminating at the base of Hermon.

This theatre is more ornate than those at Kunawât or Shühba, and it is also far more spacious. In form it is semi-circular, the diameter being 91 yards; and it has six ranges of benches. Above the upper bench is a Doric colon-



Plan of Theatre in the Castle of Busrah.

nade, which once supported an ornamented roof, covering a passage or *præincto*. The pillars are 13 inches in diameter and 10 feet high: about twenty of them occupy their places. At the ends of the benches are two large chambers, with doors opening upon the stage, which extends backwards between them about 40 feet. But the most remarkable feature of this theatre is the extent of the arena when compared with the smallness of the accommodation for spectators. Had it been intended for theatrical exhibitions merely, it would not, I think, have been constructed on such a plan.

Being within a fortress, and designed chiefly for the use of the garrison, the extent of the arena would serve for the exhibition of *athletæ*, gladiators, and other Roman games.

A few families reside within the walls of the castle ; and we were informed that during spring all the inhabitants of the place gather into it, to protect their flocks and property from the depredations of the Bedawîn. A massive gate, covered with plates of iron, secures them against plunderers. Burckhardt states that this castle was at one time maintained by a garrison of seven Muggrebins against the whole forces of the Wahabees ; and this I can easily believe, for, to assailants armed with spears and muskets, when the gate is shut the place is impregnable. Formerly a strong force of irregular cavalry was kept here by the Pasha of Damascus, but now there is no garrison, and the rapacious Bedawîn roam freely over the fields of the poor peasants, who have to pay them *black mail*. Garrisons of a few hundred horse at Busrah, Sülkhad, and Mezarîb, would be sufficient to keep the Arab tribes of the desert in check, and the fertile plain of Haurân would then be made to yield a hundredfold its present produce. But here, as elsewhere, the Turks show no regard either for the welfare of the people or the improvement of the soil. If the sordid pasha, who has bought his place, can wring as much from the peasants as will repay his outlay, he cares not though the soil become a desert, and the towns and villages heaps of ruin. Since the above was written, the state of affairs has somewhat changed in Haurân. A garrison now holds the castle of Bozrah, and, just as I anticipated, a feeling of security has attracted some inhabitants to the old city, who cultivate considerable portions of the plain.

Returning to the triumphal arch, we repassed the temple and columns, and followed the straight street northwards. It resembles those of modern Eastern cities, being narrow, with a raised path on each side, and ranges of open stalls. These, however, are of a comparatively modern date, as is evident from the fragments of columns and capitals built in the walls. As we proceeded, our guide pointed out on the left

an ornamented doorway leading into "the house of the Jew;" the tradition of which is as follows:—The governor of Busrah, in the early days of Islam, wished to found a mosque, and the site selected was occupied by the house of a Jew. He was ordered to give up his property, but refused; his house was consequently pulled down, and the mosque built. The Jew, however, went to Medina and requested an audience of the Khâlif. He was directed to the tombs without the walls, and there found 'Omer clothed in rags. Upon hearing his complaint the just Khâlif made no reply, but demanded ink and parchment; the Jew had no parchment, and 'Omer, taking the jawbone of an ass, wrote upon it these words: "Pull down the mosque, and rebuild the Jew's house." Delivering this to the supplicant, he resumed his walk. The Jew returned, the Khâlif was obeyed, and the remains of the house are still pointed out. This anecdote is characteristic of 'Omer and of the times he lived in.

Passing the house, we came to a large mosque, whose erection must be ascribed to the earliest ages of Islam; and the tradition is probably correct that it was founded by 'Omer. Its form is nearly square, and the entrance is by a small door, beside a minaret. Along the eastern side are two ranges of columns, and on each of the other sides there is one. Seventeen of the columns are monoliths of white marble, beautifully polished, and of fine proportions. The columns stand in pairs—marble and basalt side by side. This gives to the interior a confused and ungainly aspect. The building was constructed out of more ancient materials; and the inscriptions upon two of the columns show that they were intended to adorn a Christian church.

In my next walk through the city I went to the large church called the Church of the Monk Boheira. The outside is square, but the interior is cruciform, with a dome over the centre. The eastern arm was once covered with paintings of saints, traces of which remain. Over the entrance door is a Greek inscription, showing that the church was erected by Julianus, Archbishop of Bostra, in

the year 407 (A.D. 513), in honour of the martyrs Sergius, Bacchus, and Leontius.

Beside the church is a mosque, near which lies a slab of basalt containing one of the most beautiful Cufic inscriptions I have seen. Near it is another church, called the Convent of the Monk Boheira. On a stone beside the door is a Latin inscription, recording the erection of a testimonial by the third Cyrenian Legion to their colonel, Ælius Aur. Theon. A short distance to the N. is a small chapel or oratory, containing an altar, with a cross. Tradition makes this the private chapel attached to the house of the same monk.

The monk Boheira, whose name is connected with three of the buildings of Busrah, was a Nestorian. It is said that, when the Prophet was a young man in the service of Khadijah, he was on one occasion returning from Damascus, and in passing through Busrah, Boheira saw him, and, recognising the *prophetic mark*, predicted his future greatness. It is pretty well established that Boheira accompanied Mohammed to his native city. Christian writers state that he was dismissed from his convent for some misdeed, and afterwards attached himself to the Arabian prophet and became his principal assistant in writing the Koran. That Mohammed was accused by the people of Mecca of having assistants, is evident from his own words; and it is also evident that a great part of the Koran is made up of stories from the Talmud, the Bible, and early Christian legends; but it is not easy to prove who were the Prophet's instructors. Christian writers have added, that, when the Prophet had received all he wanted from the monk, he murdered him. There is considerable difference of opinion, however, as to the manner in which this was done; some maintaining that he did it designedly, while others say the deed was perpetrated under the following circumstances:—"Mohammed, having on one occasion indulged too freely in the use of wine, was enjoying himself with a few of his most devoted followers, among whom was Boheira. His companions had long been jealous of the influence this man possessed over their leader, and had resolved on the first

opportunity to put him to death. The Prophet having fallen asleep, they took his sword, beheaded the monk, and then returned it to its sheath. On awaking, and seeing the headless body of his friend, Mohammed demanded who had been guilty of such a deed. 'He only,' was the reply, 'on whose sword his blood is found.' The Prophet, drawing his sword and seeing it covered with gore, cursed the wine, and uttered the celebrated command to his followers to abstain from all use of it: 'O ye who believe, surely wine is the invention of the devil; wherefore renounce it, that ye may enjoy prosperity.'"

We turned westward along an ancient street strewn with stones and rubbish, and, passing to the N. of the large mosque, reached another mosque, called *el-Khudr*, the Arab name for St. George. Beside it is a tomb of some antiquity. Continuing our course westward over the ruins of private dwellings, we entered a green meadow containing a number of small fountains of pure water. We afterwards crossed the city wall, which is at this place almost levelled to its foundations; just beyond it is a small altar with a Latin inscription.

We now turned along the wall southward, and several Arabs joined our party. We heard them whisper to our guide that they would strip us, and that he had better help them and share the booty. He declared that he would defend us with his life; and we were thus saved from what would have been rather a serious encounter, as Mr. Barnett and I were alone and unarmed. We soon reached the western gate, called by the inhabitants "The Gate of the Winds." From it an ancient road runs across the plain in a straight line to the deserted village of Ghüsäm, about two hours distant, and thence as far as the town of Der'a.

Sitting down beside the crumbling walls of a guard-house outside the gate, I gazed long upon the ruins of this ancient city, and on the rich but deserted plain. My companions had taken shelter from a shower behind the wall, and there was not a human being, nor a living thing, nor a *sign* of life, within the range of vision. Before me was the gate-

way, open and solitary,—*within* it heaps of rubbish and piles of hewn stones : in the distance rose the solitary columns, without an entablature to support or a building to adorn ; there, too, was the triumphal arch, as if erected to commemorate the triumph of DESTRUCTION ; *without*, the country was waste and desolate. Never before had I seen such a picture of desolation except when looking down upon Palmyra ; and even there it was not so astonishing. The city of the desert might rise and flourish for a season while the tide of commerce swept past, and while it stood like an oasis in the wilderness that divides the eastern from the western worlds ; but on the discovery of another channel of communication it would naturally decline and fall. But Busrah, situated in a plain of unrivalled fertility, with springs of water and a strong fortress—why should Busrah decline and fall to all but utter desolation ? This surely was no city to grow up in a day and fade in a night ! Judging from its position and resources, human wisdom might have deemed it perennial. But a greater than human agency has been here at work. The curse of God for the sin of a rebellious people has descended upon the land. The judgment pronounced by the inspired prophet has been fulfilled to the letter : “The spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape ; the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the Lord hath spoken. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away ; *for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein . . . and judgment is come upon the plain country . . . upon Kiria-thaim, and upon Beth-Gamul, and upon Beth-meon, and upon Keriath, and upon BOZRAH, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab far and near.*”

Passing through the “Gate of the Winds,” we walked along the main street. The western section of the city is covered with the ruins of private residences. The roofs have fallen in, the walls have crumbled down, and the lines of the old streets are like furrows. At the triumphal arch we turned to the right, and walked past the castle to the large reservoir. It is an ancient work of great magnitude—

about 130 yards long by 100 broad, and 20 feet deep. The interior is lined with *rustic* masonry. The water is conveyed to it by a canal from the Zêdy. On its northern side are ruins of large houses, and a mosque in tolerable preservation; the other sides are open.

Turning northward, we came in a few minutes to a palace, with several courts strewn with fragments of columns, capitals, and sculptured cornices. In front of it is a Roman arch spanning the main street.

Such are the principal ruins of Busrah, so far as I had time to examine them. Days might be profitably spent wandering over the city, exploring its antiquities, and copying inscriptions. Here, as elsewhere, I regretted the shortness of the time I had it in my power to spend in the examination of ruins so important in themselves, and so interesting in a historical point of view. I regretted, too, the necessity which compelled me to retrace my steps, instead of penetrating the great plain of Moab, in which I could see from the castle of Bozrah so many ancient cities. These present a rich and important field for the labours of the antiquary and the geographer: and an interesting study also for the student of the Bible.

My friend Mr. Graham, whose adventurous tour to the Safâh I have already spoken of, crossed the plain of Moab to Beth-Gamul. It is five hours from Bozrah. The soil of the plain is rich, and numerous large villages stud its surface; but all are deserted, and the country is a wilderness. Beth-Gamul is about the size of Bozrah: part of the old walls and many of the buildings are in good preservation. The houses are generally of the same antique type found in the oldest cities of Bashan. To the S. and E. of Beth-Gamul the plain extends far as the eye can see; and, judging from the number of towns and villages, it must have been at one time densely peopled. Yet at the time of my visit there was not a single settled inhabitant south of Bozrah, and the whole population of that once large capital consisted of twenty-five families. Recently, however, a Turkish garrison has been placed in the castle; the Arab tribes are thus

kept in check : and, as a result of protection, some small portions of the plain to the N. and W. of Bozrah have been cultivated. Mr. Freshfield, a recent tourist, seeing these few evidences of returning prosperity, has thought proper to sneer at my description of the desolation I witnessed, and especially at my conclusions regarding the fulfilment of prophecy. He does not venture *directly* to deny the accuracy of my statements. He could not do so. I therefore think it is unworthy of any literary man to attempt by a sneering remark to cast discredit upon them. I quite believe, with Mr. Freshfield, that better times are in store for Bashan ; and when they come I shall recognise in them a still more remarkable fulfilment of prophecy ; for in regard to Bozrah and the plain around it a return of prosperity is distinctly predicted by Jeremiah (xlviii. 21, 24, 47).

Busrah at the time of my visit was almost deserted. Only twenty-five families inhabited it, occupying the lower rooms of the ancient houses. As a city it has long ceased to exist ; it is now a vast field of ruins. The number of its inhabitants is decreasing every year ; and ere long the place must be entirely abandoned, for the desert tribes are fast encroaching on the domains of the settled cultivators of the soil.

Sunday, February 6th.—To-day it continued to rain heavily at intervals ; but we enjoyed comparative peace. It was with mingled feelings of awe and thankfulness I read in my Bible the things written in former days of Bozrah, and of Bashan and Moab. The terrible fulfilment of many prophecies was now visible around me, and awe filled my heart as I gazed on the predicted desolations ; but it was with deep thankfulness I remembered that the very judgments of God tend to confirm and strengthen the Christian's faith.

HISTORY OF BUSRAH.

The first mention of the name BOZRAH is in the Book of Genesis, where, in giving a list of the kings of Edom, it is said, "Jobab the son of Zerah, of *Bozrah*, reigned." It is not possible, however, to determine whether that city is identical with the present Busrah. There was a Bozrah in

Edom, near Petra. The prophet Amos mentions it in the words, "I will send a fire upon *Teman*, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah." But it appears to me, from the words of Jeremiah, that a Bozrah is referred to by him distinct from the Bozrah of Edom. While pronouncing judgment upon *Moab* he says, "Judgment is come upon the *plain country*;" and he gives a list of some of the cities *in the plain*—among which are Beth-Gamul, Bozrah, and Kerioth. Edom comprehended the mountainous tract on the E. side of the great valley of the 'Arabah, originally called Mount Seir. Moab lay N. of it, and was at first possessed by the Emims, who were allied to the Anakims of Bashan. It would appear, from a comparison of Gen. xiv. 5-7 with Deut. ii. 10-12, 20-23, that the whole country E. of the Jordan was in primitive times held by a race of giants, comprehending the Rephaims, the Zuzims, the Emims, and the Horites; and that afterwards the kingdom of Bashan embraced the territories of the first; the country of Moab and Ammon, the possessions of the second and third; while Idumæa took in the mountainous district of the Horites. The Amorites seized the northern part of the kingdom of Moab, and from them it was taken by the tribes of Reuben and Gad; but it is doubtful whether the Moabites were ever completely expelled, and, if they were, they returned again and occupied the land during the decline of Israel's power. The predictions of Jeremiah were pronounced against cities of Moab that had been at one time in possession of the Israelites. From these facts I conclude that the cities mentioned by Jeremiah in connexion with Bozrah were all far N. of Edom. There is another circumstance connected with the prophetic denunciations which corroborates this view. After completing the sentence of Moab, including Bozrah, the Spirit of God adds: "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days." Whereas in Edom's doom we have these terrible words: "For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; *and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.*"

In the year of Rome 858 Trajan marched into the East, and his legions were everywhere victorious. His general, Cornelius Palma, entered Bashan, and subdued the whole country E. of the Jordan. Bostra was made the seat of government, and was called on the money of the period "Nova Trajana Bostra." The Romans adorned the city with public buildings, and strengthened it with fortifications. The theatre in the castle was probably constructed soon after Bostra became the capital of the province, and the temples and baths must have been founded about the same period. The city was thus growing in importance, and the tide of commerce now began to flow past it from the E. to the W., so that it became for a season what Palmyra had been before the hostile armies of Persia and the rebel Palmyrenes themselves checked the commerce along the northern line. In A.D. 245, Philippus, a native of Bostra, was raised to the throne of the Cæsars, and his own city was constituted a metropolis.

On the coins of Bostra we find legends which illustrate many of the inscriptions found in this and other ruined towns and villages in Haurân. It appears from them that "Good Fortune" was the tutelary goddess of Bostra, and she is represented as a woman, seated, with a mural crown on her head and the cornucopia in her hand. Very many of the Greek inscriptions in this province begin with the words "Good Fortune," which may be regarded as an acknowledgment of Bostra's privileges as capital. Wherever a date occurs on such inscriptions it must be the *Bostrian era*, which commenced at the time the city became the capital of the province (A.D. 106). On other coins are figured the implements of husbandry, as a plough or a yoke of oxen; on others are the emblems of cattle-rearing and pastoral life; while on a very large number is the wine-press, or a bunch of grapes, with the name *Dusaria*, a deity who, like Dionysius, patronized the cultivation of the vine.

Christianity spread widely among the inhabitants of Bostra at a very early period. In the days of Constantine it was a Christian city. Being of importance politically, it

was made the metropolitan city of an extensive ecclesiastical district. Thirty-three suffragans were at one time subject to its primate. About the middle of the third century Bostra appears to have attained to its greatest prosperity, for then one of its own sons wielded the sceptre of the Roman empire.

Bostra was one of the first cities in Syria attacked by the Muslims. The people fought bravely, but were betrayed by their cowardly governor. Knowing his designs, the garrison deposed him and caused him to be confined to his house; unfortunately the house was upon the city wall, and he contrived to open a passage to the outside, by which he admitted the enemy. The people were surprised, the guards murdered, and the gates thrown open. Many of the inhabitants were spared; but they became the slaves of their conquerors. Most of the churches were converted into mosques, and ornamented and enriched by the spoils of the Christians. The features of the city also soon changed. The spacious streets of the Roman age were encumbered with wretched stalls, between which a narrow and tortuous path was left, barely sufficient to afford passage to laden animals. The temples and monumental statues were either overthrown or concealed behind the miserable structures of the Saracens. The fortifications were in part preserved and the old castle kept in repair: but the prosperity and glory of Bostra were gone, and the city declined under the withering influence of Islam until it has become desolate.



West Gate, Busrah.

CHAPTER XIII.

BUSRAH TO SŪLKHAD, KUREIYEH, HEBRÂN, AND SUWEIDEH.

Adventure with Bedawîn — Approach to Sŭlkhad by Roman road — Description of Sŭlkhad, the ancient SALCAH — The castle — Probable age of the building — Topography of the "Hills of Bashan" — Deserted towns — Ancient vineyards — History of Salcah — Ruins of Kureiyeh — Identified with KERIOTH — Antiquity of its houses — Fulfilment of prophecy — Ruins of Hebrân.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF JEBEL HAURÂN.—*The cities of Argob and Bashan — Ancient sites.*

February 7th.—DARK CLOUDS shrouded the mountains, and swept over the plain, as we went out at an early hour to take a final glance at the ruins of Busrah. The rain however had ceased, and as the wind had shifted northward we anticipated a change of weather and a bright day. We

were not disappointed, for a northern breeze cleared the sky ere an hour had passed. I proceeded to an elevated spot near the triumphal arch, from which I took my last view of the ruins, fixing in my mind every prominent building. I have often had singular pleasure in calling up to memory some striking scene thus visited and surveyed. I have been able to picture the whole of some city or landscape before my mind's eye, as viewed from a well-remembered spot, and to look in succession on each prominent edifice, or striking feature, to which my attention had been called by historic association or architectural beauty. I know not if this be a common feeling with travellers, or if others are wont to derive from it the same pleasure; with me it makes travel a perennial source of enjoyment.

When I returned, I found my companions ready, so we rode off amid the salâms of the sheikh and a crowd of retainers. A liberal *bakhsisk* had almost overcome Muslem fanaticism. The orders for the day were, first to Salcah and then to Kerioth. The latter place being only two hours distant, we sent the servants and baggage direct, and I gave them our letter of introduction to the Druze chief: by this separation our party was weakened at a time when numbers might be of advantage; but still, in case of an encounter with Bedawîn, we considered the baggage and mules would prove an encumbrance and temptation. There still remained five of us well mounted and well armed; so that no ordinary band of Arabs would venture an attack. We were informed that the district through which our route lay, though studded with towns and villages, was uninhabited. The people of Busrah stated that of late it had been much frequented by Bedawy marauders, watching an opportunity to descend upon some border village, or carry off some unguarded flock.

At 8.40 we left the sheikh's house, and were conducted along the main street eastward over heaps of rubbish. I observed several buildings with porticoes of small columns which I had not previously seen. The eastern part of the city appears to have been dotted with public buildings;

and the finest of the private residences were also situated there. A few hundred yards from the city we observed a reservoir on our left, still larger than that at the castle. Our path was along the Roman road, which runs in a straight line to Salcah, having a gentle ascent from the gate of Busrah. The soil here is exceedingly rich, and the fences of large rectangular fields can be traced.

We rode at a steady pace up the easy slope. The rain of the previous day had been sufficient to make the soil firm beneath our horses' feet; and we consequently preferred the smooth fields to the hard pavement of the road. The village of Burd, conspicuously situated on a rising ground, now attracted our attention; and as its buildings appeared large and ornamental, we determined to gallop over to it. As we approached, however, we saw a number of figures moving among the houses. Mahmûd thought some shepherd with his flock had taken refuge there from the rains; but it soon became evident that they were men who climbed to the terraced roofs to watch our approach. We of course pronounced them Bedawîn, as we had been told the country was uninhabited. That Bedawîn should be in such a place at such an hour seemed strange, and the natural conclusion was that they were bound on no peaceful errand. For us either to escape now or pass unnoticed was impossible, except indeed we should wheel about and gallop back to Busrah, and this did not suit our purposes. Mahmûd called a halt, and said he wished to give us a few hints about Arab warfare, as we would now or during the day most probably have an encounter with them. His first advice was, that we should never attempt to run under any circumstances; "because," he said, "their horses are fleet, and a flying foe gives them fresh courage. Whatever their number be, let us meet them fearlessly: if they allow us to pass, well; but if they attack us, we must fire upon them—it is our only chance: and let no one fire until he is sure of at least bringing down a horse." This was no very comfortable address to men of peace, and we half wished we had gone with our servants; but wishes were useless at this stage.

We had calculated on a clear route, and now it seemed we were to be disappointed ; and thus, while hoping the best, we prepared for the worst. We assured Mahmûd he might rely upon our standing by him whatever occurred. Turning to the village, we saw rather formidable numbers collected on the house-tops, while horses appeared picketed below. Mahmûd bound up his *kefiyeh*, loosened his sword in its scabbard, and examined his pistols. Desiring us to await his return, he galloped across the fields to the village, now less than half a mile on our right. We observed a man coming out to meet him ; a few seconds elapsed, when, waving his hand for us to proceed, he set out at a quick pace toward our road again. Our fancied foes proved to be a few families of peasants who had come some days previously to make a settlement in Burd.

We passed Burd at 9.30. Beyond it the country becomes stony, but the stones have been collected into large piles and broad dikes, and the intervening patches of soil cleared. We had hitherto been traversing fertile ground. Now, however, the aspect of the country changed. The whole has a savage and barren appearance on account of the vast quantities of stones ; while it is broken and undulating, with rocky tells at intervals. We had reached the southern spurs of the mountain-range, which stretch far into the plain. Still continuing to ascend, we reached at 11.10 a few large patches of clear soil, where a number of Druzes were engaged in agricultural pursuits—each man having his gun across his shoulders, and pistols in his belt. One might well feel surprised that they should cultivate with such industry and care little patches among the rocks, while thousands of acres of the richest soil lie waste a few miles westward. The reason is obvious. Arab horsemen cannot so easily make a *raid* in broken ground, and Druze muskets are doubly dreaded among rocks.

We soon gained the summit of the ridge, from whence we had a commanding view. This ridge runs out from the mountains in a south-westerly direction. On its north-western side is the valley of the Zêdy, in which Kureiyeh

and several other towns and villages are situated. On the S. and S.E. the ground is level, and is intersected at the distance of about a mile by the deep bed of a winter torrent. At 10.35 we had the deserted town of Deffen two miles on our right, and three-quarters of an hour afterwards the village of Muneidhirah was a few hundred yards on our left. From the moment we gained the summit the ruins of Sülkhad formed a conspicuous object in front. The ancient road runs like an arrow direct toward the cone, on the top of which the castle stands. Passing Muneidhirah we crossed two rivulets winding among the rocks; and then urging our horses to a canter wherever the road was sufficiently clear, we soon commenced to ascend the hill of Salcah. The slope, gradual and gentle at first, became steep, and we were glad at last to wind back and forth among the tombs that cover the hill-side. At 12.15 we reached the *lower* moat which encircles the castle hill, and, turning to the right, rode along it, above the ruins of the city, till we reached a point on the S. side where a narrow lane turns down among the houses; following this for a few hundred yards, we entered a spacious paved court in front of a large mosque, and dismounted.

Here we picketed our horses and left Mahmûd in charge. He told us, ere we attempted to explore, to put our pistols in our belts, lest some hidden Arabs should pounce upon us. The building beside which we stood is apparently one of the largest in the town. It is square, and its flat roof is supported by piers and arches. The windows are very small, and are formed of one stone, pierced in pattern-work. Over the door is a bunch of grapes, badly sculptured. In front of it stands an isolated minaret of recent date, but the stones of which it and the surrounding buildings are constructed were taken from ancient ruins.

My first object being to get a general view of the city and country, I ascended the terraced roof of the mosque. I estimated the circumference of the city at from two to three miles, including the castle. There is no building of great extent or beauty now remaining. A large number

of the private dwellings are perfect, with their massive stone walls, stone roofs, and stone doors; 300 or 400 families could settle in them, and find ample accommodation. There are no fountains in or around the city, nor is there any stream or winter torrent; but on the eastern side of the castle hill are large reservoirs. While I was thus engaged Mr. Barnett wandered through the streets and lanes in search of inscriptions, but without success. On his return we ascended to the castle, situated on the top of a conical tell, from 300 to 400 feet above the city. The tell was the crater of a volcano, and its sides are in places covered with cinders and blocks of lava similar to those on Tell Shûhba.

On our way, after passing the houses of the town, we came to the moat which encircles the base of the tell. Crossing it, we ascended the steep and smooth esplanade; on reaching the top we came to another and much deeper moat, encompassing the castle itself. The rock on which the fortress stands is elevated above the top of the esplanade, and the scarp is faced with hewn stones at an angle of about seventy degrees. In several places on the walls are lions sculptured in relief. Two of these, facing each other, of colossal proportions, are on the W. side; and two others have a palm-tree between them. These sculptures are found at various elevations on the walls, and most of them evidently occupy the places they were originally designed for, though I noticed one pair turned upside down. High up on the wall is a beautiful Arabic inscription, encircling the building. The entrance gate is on the E., where a bridge spanned the moat, but is now prostrate. We were obliged to descend into the moat and crawl up the broken scarp to the gate, now also ruinous. On a stone on the right side of it is a Greek inscription, containing the date 140 of the Bostrian era, A.D. 246. Over the interior gateway is an eagle with expanded wings, and near it are two capitals with busts in relief. Passing the gateway, we entered an arched passage, running round a portion of the southern side, and communicating with the interior by

small doors now choked up with ruins. On reaching the end of this vault we crawled through a low door, and, climbing over heaps of hewn stones, reached the interior, which is a mass of ruins. Not one apartment, so far as we could discover, has escaped the destroyer. On the southwestern side, two or three halls are still in such a state that some idea may be formed of their dimensions. In one of the lofty towers I approached a low door, with the intention of crawling through it. I observed, however, several fresh footmarks in the dust before it, as if some men had recently gone in, and, as I could see no trace of their egress, I remained satisfied with putting my head within the door, and, as the interior was dark, I was the more reconciled to turn aside. We knew that we were now not merely beyond the bounds of civilization, but also of habitation; and that this very city had at a comparatively recent period been deserted by its inhabitants in consequence of the attacks of the wild sons of the desert. Our safety depended on escaping notice, or ability to meet and defend ourselves against such as might observe us.

From the top of this noble castle I obtained an extensive and interesting view. The results of my survey I shall give as briefly as possible; and it may not be considered unimportant if I describe with some minuteness the character of the scenery and the features of the landscape, as this region is almost unknown, the brief notes of Burckhardt containing the only information we possess.

The castle stands on a conical hill, at the southern extremity of Jebel Haurân. For some distance north of Salcah the ridge is broad, with gently sloping sides; it is not lofty, but at intervals there are high conical peaks. The sides and summits were at one time cultivated, and the stone fences that enclose the fields can be traced. The ridge gradually increases in elevation to Kuleib. Down the centre of the ridge, from near the base of the latter peak, runs a shallow wady. The country on the S.W. and W. is an undulating plain, dotted with deserted towns and conical tells. Immediately beneath Salcah the ridge

sinks into a plain, in which are several deserted villages, and traces of fields and gardens. S. by W., nearly an hour distant, is a lofty tell with a deserted town on its eastern slope, and a short distance E. of it is another tell, with terraced sides. On both these tells, and in the plain round them, are many fig-trees. Due S. is a depression in the plain, running as far as the eye can see in a straight line. In it I noticed several ruined or deserted towns and large villages. To the S.E. runs an ancient road, straight as an arrow, across the plain, passing the base of a tell at the distance of half an hour, and then another nearly an hour beyond, with a large building on its summit. Our guide informed us that this road leads to Busrah on the Persian Gulf: the same statement I afterwards heard from others; and the historian Ibn S'aid says that from the castle of Salcah a king's highway ran to Irak, and that by it Baghdad may be reached in ten days. On the plain extending from the S. to the E. I counted fourteen towns and villages, none of them more than twelve miles distant, and all of them, so far as I could see by the aid of a telescope, habitable, like Salcah, but deserted. The houses in some of them I could see standing perfect; those square towers, so conspicuous in all the ancient villages of the Haurân, are here too. We learn from Arab authors that there has not been a settled inhabitant in these plains for more than 500 years, and we may thus form some idea of how admirably fitted the houses are to resist the hand of time.

The age and history of the castle of Salcah are, like those of many other structures in Bashan, involved in obscurity: no record or monumental tablet has been found to throw light on its origin. Burckhardt discovered an inscription which, could it be relied on, gives us the required information. It is to the effect that the castle was built during the reign of S'aid ed-Dîn abu Takmar. This directs us to the era of the crusades, at which time, no doubt, the fortress may have been repaired; but it is sufficiently evident that it must have been founded long prior to that age. The character of the masonry, the sculptured lions, the eagle over the entrance gateway, and

the circular arches, show that it could not have been constructed by Saracenic architects. It is no uncommon thing to find Saracen princes patching up venerable structures, and taking to themselves the credit of their erection.

That *Sülkhad* is identical with SALCAH can scarcely be doubted. The names are nearly the same, and the position agrees well with the descriptions given in the Bible. "All Bashan unto Salcah" is a phrase used in Josh. xiii. 11; and from it and two other passages in which this town is mentioned we conclude that it was situated on the extreme border of the kingdom of Bashan.

After Salcah fell into the hands of the Israelites, and was mentioned by their historians as a boundary, we have no reference to it in the Bible. The inscriptions found on its tombs and monuments are its next most ancient memorials. On one of the grave-stones is an inscription with the date A.D. 196. The commanding position of the fortress would doubtless early attract the attention of the Roman governors of Bostra, and would be selected as a military position for guarding the frontier.

We learn from Arab historians that the country round Salcah was rich in vines; and travellers of the present day can see how admirably adapted are the mountain-slopes and the sunny plains along their base for the growth of the vine and the fig. All the declivities are terraced. The stones that covered the soil have been collected into heaps and built up in the fences of the fields and vineyards. It is evident that the whole region extending from Busrah to Kureiyeh, from Kureiyeh to Sülkhad, and from Sülkhad as far as the eye can see eastward and southward, was closely cultivated and densely populated. In the thirteenth century the vineyards of Sülkhad and the gardens of Busrah were still celebrated. A few years before Burckhardt's visit there were some settled inhabitants in Sülkhad and 'Orman. Every year is narrowing the borders of the settled inhabitants, and unless a new system of government is adopted the whole country E. of the Jordan must be abandoned by those who cultivate the soil. Nowhere is there such a melancholy

example of the fatal effects of tyranny, rapacity, and misrule, as here. Fields, vineyards, pastures, villages, cities—all deserted; and the few inhabitants that remain drag out a miserable existence, oppressed by the robbers of the desert on the one hand, and the more formidable robbers of the Government on the other. The Druzes are the only exceptions. Their courage, their union, and their position, enable them to brave, when occasion demands it, both Turks and Bedawîn.

Here again we had reached the boundary of our prescribed route, and were forced to retrace our steps. With fourteen deserted towns in view on one side, and at least as many more on the other, it was not without feelings of regret I turned away. No traveller has hitherto traversed this fertile land or these forsaken cities. Salcah has formed the utmost point attained by the very few who have visited Bashan. This seems strange, since Syria is traversed by hundreds longing for adventure and thirsting after fame. It is much to be desired that some one, with the exactness and learning of a Robinson, combined with the enterprise and enthusiasm of a Burckhardt or a Layard, should undertake the survey of the eastern borders of Bashan and Moab. It would be a tour of great interest, both in a geographical and antiquarian point of view, to go eastward from Damascus to the Tellûl, and then S.E. to the Safâh. Thence a south-western course might be taken to survey the plain and explore the deserted towns along the eastern base of Jebel Haurân; after which those around Salcah could be examined, and the line of the ancient road followed for a day and a half or two days; and then, sweeping round to the right, the traveller might traverse the plains of Moab, visiting the ruins of Beth-Gamul, and such other cities as still exist. The whole tour might be accomplished in a month; and during spring, when the Bedawîn are spread over the plains, it would not be attended with any great difficulty.¹

At 2.25 we remounted, and turned towards Kureiyeh.

¹ This is the route which my friend Mr. Graham has since in part followed, with such interesting results.

Mahmûd did not seem well acquainted with the road, and led us back some distance along the path we had traversed in the morning. Turning to the right, we rode past the deserted village of Muneidhirah. Here are, as usual, a square tower, and houses with stone doors and roofs ready for habitation, but forsaken. We recrossed the low ridge, winding among heaps of stones, piled up by the industrious of former ages; we then descended into Wady Abu Hamâka. The country has a savage and forbidding aspect: stones and jagged black rocks cover the vale and hill-sides. We at last struck an ancient paved road, which appears to have connected Kureiyeh and Sülkhad, probably running past the deserted town of 'Ayûn. We reached Kureiyeh at 4.30. We were conducted to the centre of the town, where we found a large assembly of elders prepared to bid us welcome. As I rode up I looked round for the celebrated chief, but none appeared to answer the description I had heard of him. Just as I dismounted, however, a portly figure in a fur-lined robe stepped from a gateway and gave us the usual salutation. The whole assembly rose, and our host, requesting us to follow, led the way through a dirty court-yard into a still dirtier reception-room.

Sheikh *Ismâil el-Atrash* ("Ishmael the Deaf") is acknowledged to be the bravest of a brave race. He excels in personal prowess all the other chiefs, and has thus obtained an influence which neither his rank nor his wealth could have secured. He is not descended, like his brethren, from a noble family; a soldier of fortune, he has carved his way to power by his sword. His personal appearance indicates the man of undaunted courage and inflexible will. He is little above middle height, and did not therefore appear to great advantage beside some of his present visitors; but the short neck, broad shoulders, and huge limbs, give evidence of enormous strength. His features are small and well formed, his eye steady, and his whole bearing that of a man conscious of power, and confident in his strength and skill. A long beard of a dark sandy colour gives him a venerable appearance, which is also heightened by the

ample folds of a large silk turban. In conversation he is brief in his statements, and briefer still in his replies. He conversed freely of the late war, and of the prospect of its renewal, and he stated, as all the other chiefs had done, the determination of the Druzes never to give conscripts. Kureiyeh, we were now informed, had been the headquarters of the Druzes during the war, and not any place in the Lejah, as I had before understood. When an attack was to be made, or a caravan of supplies to be cut off, from Kureiyeh the expedition set out; and it appeared from the conversation that the Druzes had spies in Damascus, who gave accurate information of every projected movement of the troops, and of every convoy of ammunition or provision about to be sent to the army. This I gathered at the time from various replies of the sheikh in answer to my questions, and I have since obtained full confirmation of its accuracy.

I asked our host on what kind of terms he was with the Bedawîn, who during spring and autumn encompass his territory. He stated that, while there is in general a *formal* friendship between the Druzes and the desert tribes, yet forays and reprisals are of weekly occurrence. I inquired whether all the villages in the Haurân paid *black mail*. He replied that all the Muslem villages did so; but that the Druzes exacted tribute from the Arabs for the privilege of permitting them to water their flocks at their fountains and reservoirs.

In warfare Ismaïl wears a steel helmet, and a coat of chain armour, which is supposed to be both spear and bullet proof. His scimitar he showed us: it is long and heavy, and of the finest Damascus steel.

Kureiyeh is situated in a valley at the south-western base of Jebel Haurân, between the rivulets Zêdy and Abu Hamâka. The ruins are of great extent, but their circumference I was not able to determine with any degree of accuracy, as there is no commanding spot from which a view can be obtained, and the shortness of the time at my disposal prevented me from going round the city. The

statement of Buckingham that, in its flourishing days, it was as large as Busrah, is incorrect; and Burckhardt's estimate of about 500 houses is, on the other hand, far too low. It appeared to me, by walking through it, to be about as large as Sükhad. The houses have the same general appearance as those in the other villages, with massive stone walls, stone roofs, and stone doors. There is no structure of any extent or architectural beauty now remaining; but in the streets and lanes are many fragments of columns, and other evidences of former grandeur. There are several ancient towers among the ruins: on one of them is a Greek inscription which I attempted to copy, but it was so much broken that I could not decipher it. In the centre of the town is a large pool or reservoir, on the W. side of which is a singular structure. A series of benches, rising like those of a theatre, have a covering over them, supported on three ranges of columns—the lower row resting on the ground, the second on the middle bench, and the third on the upper bench. The whole is in bad taste, and was constructed at a comparatively late period out of the ruins of other buildings. On the front of one of the benches is a Greek inscription, from which we learn that the reservoir was built at the expense of the town in the year 190 (A.D. 296). Upon a large building on the E. side of the town, called by the inhabitants the *church*, there is a short inscription with a very early date—34 of the Bostrian era (A.D. 140).

The country round Kureiyeh is covered with heaps of loose stones, and consequently the place is secure against any incursion of the Arabs. The rivulet Abu Hamâka has its source among the mountains eastward. We were informed that there are some ruins at the fountain, and this is probably the place passed by Buckingham on his way to Sükhad, which he represents as the source of the Zêdy.

February 8th.—We rose with the dawn, and resumed our examination of the ruins. Even at this early hour the Druze women were engaged in their labours. Flocks of cows, horses, sheep, and goats filled every court-yard, and blocked

up every street and lane. The ordinary paths were thus impracticable; and we followed the example of the active women, who walked along the tops of walls and over terraced roofs. We were surprised to see the agility with which they passed from place to place, many of them with pails of milk on their heads, and others with their children astride upon their shoulders. The youthful cavaliers kept a firm seat, now and then grasping the *tantâr*,¹ or horn, as their mothers skipped over a pool or scaled a wall.

In the enumeration of the cities in the plain of Moab by Jeremiah, KERIOTH is mentioned in connexion with *Beth-Gamul* and *Bozrah*; and here we find the ruins of KUREIVEH, on the side of the plain, five miles distant from the latter city. If the soundness of my arguments for the identity of Bozrah and Beth-Gamul be admitted, there can scarcely be a doubt that this is Kerioth. It would seem to be implied in the words of the prophet, in another part of the same denunciation, that Kerioth was a strong city; and the position of the ruins in the midst of rocks agrees well with such a description. It struck me forcibly also, while wandering through the streets and lanes, and examining minutely the vestiges of antiquity, that many of the houses bear marks of having been erected at a very remote period. The few square towers and fragments of buildings, which inscriptions prove to have been erected in the first centuries of the Christian era, are modern in comparison with the massive walls and colossal stone doors of some of the private dwellings. The simplicity of the plan of these structures, their low roofs, the ponderous blocks of roughly-hewn stones of which they are built, and the great thickness of the walls, seem to point to a period far earlier than the Roman age, and possibly even antecedent to the conquest of this land by the Israelites. We are informed by the sacred historian

¹ This singular ornament is generally worn by the Druze women in the Haurân. It is a tapering tube of silver, sometimes of gold, from *six inches* to *two feet* long, balanced by weights and resting on the front part of the head. It is always covered with a veil, and is only worn by married women.

that in the land of Argob there were threescore great cities with gates and bars. These had apparently been constructed by the aboriginal Rephaims ; and the ancient houses of Kureiyeh appear to be such as a race of giants would build. The huge doors and gates of stone, some of which are nearly *eighteen inches* in thickness, and the ponderous bars, the places for which can still be seen, are characteristic of a period when architecture was in its infancy, and when strength and security were the great requisites. The stone flags of the roofs, resting on the massive walls, render the houses almost as firm as if built of solid masonry ; and the basalt of which they are constructed is very hard. May not the language of Ritter be true, "that these buildings remain as eternal witnesses of the conquest of Bashan by Jehovah" ? We have in Bashan, perhaps, some of the most ancient structures of which the world can boast ; and in viewing them the mind is led back to patriarchal times, when the kings of the East warred with the Rephaims in Ashtaroth-Karnaim, and with the Emims in the plain of Kiriathaim. The temples and tombs of Upper Egypt are of great interest, as the works of one of the most ancient as well as one of the most enlightened nations of a former age ; and the palaces and sculptures of Nineveh are still more interesting as memorials of a great and powerful city, now exhumed, after lying unknown for nearly 2000 years ; but the massive dwellings and stone gates of Bashan scarcely yield in interest to the monuments of Egypt and Assyria. It is true they are antiquities of another kind, and cannot vie with those in splendour or extent ; yet they are the memorials of a race of giants that has been extinct for more than 3000 years, and of which Og, king of Bashan, was one of the last representatives ; and they form, I believe, the only specimens the world can afford of the private dwellings of remote antiquity. The monuments designed by the genius and reared up by the wealth of imperial Rome are fast mouldering away in this land ; but the simple buildings of a far earlier age in many places remain perfect. It is worthy of remark that the towns and castles of Bashan were

counted ancient even in the days of Ammianus Marcellinus, who thus writes: "Fortresses and strong castles have been erected by the *ancient inhabitants* among the retired mountains and forests to guard against the attacks of their neighbours. Here also, in the midst of *numerous towns*, are some great cities, such as Bostra and Gerasa, encompassed by massive walls." But the land of Moab has now become a desert; the cities of Moab are now forsaken; the palaces of Kerioth have been destroyed. The words of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah are fulfilled: "The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits, and upon thy vintage; joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab I have caused the wine to fail from the wine-press; none shall tread with shouting."¹

Having breakfasted, we prepared to resume our journey; but were detained a few minutes waiting for letters the sheikh wished us to convey to Mr. Wood of Damascus. He had on the previous day mentioned to me the difficulty he experienced in transmitting important communications to the city, and I volunteered to take charge of such as he might choose to send. He thanked me, and remarked that there was little fear of Kurds or Turks taking them from me. But it so happened that ere forty hours had passed these very letters, with other things of more value, were taken at a time when I was glad to escape with life.

¹ Jer. xlviii. 32, 33. It is worthy of notice, as a striking fulfilment of this prophecy, that the figs and grapes that still grow in the orchards and vineyards around Sülkhad are every year rifled by the Bedawîn. It was these acts of robbery, more than dread of personal violence, that caused Sülkhad and other places near it to be deserted by their inhabitants. Not unfrequently the grain crops of the people of Busrah are completely eaten up by the passing flocks of the Arabs. How wonderfully minute were the predictions of the prophet: "The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits and upon thy vintage"!

I have read the remarks of Mr. Freshfield on my explorations at Kureiyeh, but they do not contain a single fact affecting the truth of my descriptions, or calculated in the least degree to alter my views as expressed above. His tone where referring to me is, as usual, caustic; but the thoughtful reader will see (pp. 38, 39) that when he condescends to facts, they are in my favour.

Our intention being to reach Nejrân in the Lejah that day, some conversation naturally arose about our route. We wished to go by Hebrân, to see more of the country; but Mahmûd said the servants could not accomplish so much. I replied they could go by the plain, and we would follow our own course. New objections were urged, and all present seemed anxious to relieve Mahmûd of a long and hard ride; and *they* could not, of course, see any reason why we should select the way by Hebrân. I saw there was no use in arguing the point, and held my peace; whereupon they all agreed that we should take the road across the plain.

The letters came at last, and we bade adieu to the warlike sheikh. When we were mounted, I said to the servants, "Go you to Nejrân, and tell Sheikh Kâsem we will be with him at sunset;" and then, turning to Mahmûd, I requested him to lead to Hebrân. Not a word of remonstrance was uttered, nor a remark made; all saluted us respectfully as we passed, and uttered the usual parting benediction, "In the faith of God." It was 8.40 when we rode out from the ruins. At 9.28 we crossed the wild ravine of the Zêdy, in which a large and rapid torrent rushed over a rugged bed. On its N. bank, a little to the right of the place we crossed, is a small ruined village. We had hitherto travelled far to the E. of the direction of Hebrân, in order to avoid the deep ravines, and to reach this spot, where alone, it appears, Wady Zêdy can be crossed by animals. We now turned to the left, and rode over rugged heights towards Kuleib, which rose in front a magnificent cone. At 10 o'clock we reached a deep ravine coming from the eastern base of that mountain. Its banks are lined with oaks, and the hills around are covered with evergreen forests. After riding along its left bank for five minutes, we turned to the left down a zigzag path, crossed the stream, and, ascending the lofty ridge on its opposite side, reached Hebrân at 10.15.

Hebrân is situated on the summit of a mountain-ridge which equals in altitude any of the peaks south of Kuleib. It commands an extensive view not only over the plain to the W. and S., but over the hills eastward. The whole of

our route from 'Ary to Busrah and from Busrah to Sükhad lay before me. Less than two miles below on the mountain-side was 'Afnah, whose scattered ruins occupy a fine position on the brow of a ravine. The valley of the Zêdy lay at my feet, and my eye ran along it to where it enters the plain, in which are the remains of towns and villages almost innumerable. The battlements of Salcah rose over intervening peaks. Eastward beyond the ravine is a green plain, with a large pond in its centre, and beyond it are hill-tops clothed with oak forests, among which appeared the grey towers of Sehwet el-Khudr, crowning an eminence. In the valley behind it, I was told, is a large town of the same name. A rugged wooded ridge runs in a direct line to the foot of Kuleib, which rises beyond it a graceful cone. Its eastern face is naked, and of a dusty red colour, as if covered with a stratum of ashes; the other sides are clothed with oak forests. On each side of this ridge is a deep wady, and on its western declivity, near the base of Kuleib, stands the ruined town of Kufr. It is not visible from Hebrân, but its position was pointed out to me. Burckhardt went to it from this place, and gives a brief description of its ruins. He says: "It is built in the usual style of this country, entirely of stone; most of the houses are still perfect. The doors are uniformly of stone, and even the *gates of the town, between nine and ten feet high, are of a single piece of stone.*"

Hebrân stands on the extremity of the ridge above mentioned. The ruins of a few public buildings can be traced, many of the private houses are perfect, and a few of them are now inhabited. On a projecting cliff, S. of the town, stand the ruins of a temple, which appears to have been converted into a church. A low stone door, evidently transported from some other building, gives admission to the interior. On the E. was a portico, now prostrate. An old man, hearing us ask for inscriptions, led us to the top, and there we found a long Greek inscription, in beautiful characters, on a large slab that had apparently been once over the main door. It informs us that the temple was erected in the eighteenth year of Antoninus Pius, A.D. 155.

It was with great difficulty we got away from the kind Druze inhabitants, who had already sent to a neighbouring flock, and brought a kid to make a feast for us. I regretted that we had sent our servants to Nejrân, for I observed that in this district a day might be spent to great advantage. Sehwet el-Khudr, Kufr, and Kuleib, lie within an easy ride. Burckhardt's map had led me astray in the calculation of distances in this part of the mountains. There Sehwet el-Khudr is represented as some hours distant, at the eastern base of the mountains; while in reality it is in the very centre of the chain, and only three miles from Hebrân. There was no use, however, in forming new plans or regretting old arrangements now; and so, when I had finished my observations, we continued our journey.

At 10.55 we left Hebrân, following a path that skirts the ruins on the western slope of the ridge. After passing these we turned down the declivity westward, and crossed a Roman road, which runs in a straight line to 'Afnah and Busrah on the left, and up the hill to Kufr on the right, and from thence, as my guide informed me, to extensive ruins called *Kantarrah*. A few minutes afterwards we came to a large stream, whose source is at 'Ain Mûsa, near Kufr. At the spot where we crossed it, it was divided into two channels by a mound covered with dwarf oak; each channel was about 20 feet wide and 2 or 3 deep. We afterwards crossed a rocky ridge, and entered another wady with a smaller stream. We rode along its banks in a north-western direction for fifteen minutes; it then turns W., and, running down between lofty tells, enters the plain, and flows across it to the N. of 'Ary. Our road led up the right bank, and at 11.40 we were beside the large village of Sehweh, situated on a tell. The declivities of the mountain around this village, as well as the plain below, are celebrated for their fertility.

We did not enter the village, but continued our route along the side of the mountains; and having crossed a ravine, we had a ruined village on our left—probably the Khirbet Rishe of Burckhardt. We passed Wady Th'aly, in

which is a very small stream. At 12.25 Mahmûd pointed out a fountain, a quarter of an hour on the right, at the base of a wooded hill, called 'Ain Kerâthy, of which he related a curious legend. In ancient times a king wished to build a city on the plain, and selected Mezarîb, but, there being no water there, he constructed an aqueduct underground from this fountain, and thus secured an abundant supply. The water still flows, and the lake at Mezarîb is supplied, from 'Ain Kerâthy.

After crossing another ravine we reached Raha. We now turned to the left, and, after a fast ride of a quarter of an hour, saw the small village of Musâd on our right, at the foot of two conical hills. In half an hour more we entered Suweideh. We had still a long journey before us, and did not wish to spend our time in paying empty compliments to Sheikh Wâked. We sent our salâms with Nikôla while we rode across the bridge and sat down in the shade of the Doric monument.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF JEBEL HAURÂN.

I had now finished my tour among the hills of Bathanyeh, and was about to turn away from them, most probably for ever. I felt glad that I had been able to visit a country renowned in primeval history, and among the first conquered by the Israelites; but it was with regret I turned away to other places ere I had explored the whole region. The beauty of the scenery, the grandeur of many of the ruins, the hearty welcome of the people, and above all the testimony afforded at every step to the accuracy of Holy Scripture, filled my mind with such feelings as I had never before experienced in travel. I had often read how God delivered into the hands of the children of Manasseh, Og king of Bashan and all his people; and I had observed that a portion of his territory, the region of Argob, contained "*threescore cities* fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, beside unwallled towns a great many." I had turned to my atlas, and found

the *whole of Bashan* not larger than an English county. I was surprised; and though my faith in the Divine Record was not shaken, yet I thought some strange statistical mystery must hang over the passage. That *sixty walled cities*, beside unwall'd towns a great many, should be found at such a remote age, far from the sea, with no rivers and little commerce, appeared inexplicable. Inexplicable though it appeared, it was true. On the spot I had now verified it. Lists of *more than a hundred* cities and villages situated in these mountains I had tested and found correct, though not complete. More than thirty of these I had myself either visited or seen. Of the antiquity of the ruins scarcely a doubt can be entertained, and the extent of the more important among them has already been stated. Here then we have a venerable record, more than 3000 years old, containing incidental statements and statistics which few would be inclined to receive on trust, and not a few to cast aside as exaggerated, and yet *close examination shows them to be minutely accurate*.

The town of 'Orman, visited by Burckhardt, I saw from Sülkhad; it is in the plain, eastward of the mountains. It is a place of some historical importance, as the site of *Philippopolis*. It is identified by an inscription copied by Burckhardt, in which the name occurs, with the date 253 (A.D. 359). The Emperor Philip was a native of Bostra, and founded Philippopolis to perpetuate his own name, and to honour his native land. His family may probably have come from this town; and when he obtained the sceptre of the Cæsars he rebuilt it, and gave it his own name.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUWEIDEH TO NEJRÂN, EDREI, AND DAMASCUS.

Roman road — The plain of Bashan — The borders of the Lejah, Trachonitis — Nejrân, description of its ruins — Kerâtah, Coreathes — Ride along the side of the Lejah — Busr el-Hariry — Fanaticism of its inhabitants — Danger of penetrating the Lejah — Approach to Edrei — Description of its position and ruins — Conflict with its inhabitants — Rescue — Threats and plans of escape — Midnight flight — Bivouac in a defile — Wild scenery of the Lejah.

TOPOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE LEJAH.—
Its extent and boundaries — Identified with Trachonitis and ARGOB — Great numbers of deserted towns — Ruins of Phæno.

The plain of Bashan — Arrival at Deir 'Aly — The valley of the Pharpar — The Hâj road.

AT 1.55 we mounted, and rode down to the plain. In ten minutes we crossed the Roman road. The loose stones and rough ground continued till we reached Welgha. Among the rocks there is abundance of rich soil. Welgha is built on a tell, and resembles the other villages of this region. Half an hour N. from it, on another tell, is Rîmeh, and between them, in a stony wady, are two towers resembling the tombs of Kunawât. On passing Welgha the plain becomes open, and the soil is free from stones, affording fine fields for wheat. At 3.30 we reached the small village of Mezra'ah. We soon afterwards crossed one of the branches of Wady Kunawât, and then rode over a rich plain to Sijn. On our way Mejdél was about a mile on the right. Here Burckhardt found several Greek inscriptions. Some distance N. of it is Kefr el-Laha, where there are ruins of ancient buildings, with inscriptions of the time of Gordianus II.

Sijn stands on a tell, and contains buildings of great solidity. As we passed it, the Druze sheikh and several of

his attendants saw us, and it was with difficulty we were able to get away from them, so eager were they that we should remain for the night. The stony ground here again commenced ; and the black porous trap cropped up in jagged masses, many of them 20 feet high and 40 or 50 yards in diameter. These, with huge intervening boulders and scattered fragments, give the country a savage aspect. As we advanced, the patches of clear soil became smaller and less frequent, and the rocks higher and broader. Nejrân now appeared before us, the black walls and square towers rising lonely and deserted in a wilderness of rocks. The singular physical features I had remarked at Burâk here again showed themselves, and were evidences that we had crossed the borders of the Lejah. Some mounds of loose stones on an open place to the left attracted my attention, and Mahmûd informed me that here were placed the batteries of Ibrâhîm Pasha during his war with the Druzes. A fortified camp had been constructed behind them.

We reached Nejrân at 5.15. The approach to the town is by a winding path among the rocks. We had to scramble over smooth ledges of basalt, where our horses could scarcely keep their feet ; and these were separated by deep fissures, and in some places surrounded by water. A stranger would have sought in vain for the path, if path it can be called. On entering the town we were led to a large open place, where we found the venerable Sheikh Kâsem abu Fakher in the midst of his elders, waiting to receive us. They rose as we approached ; and after the ordinary salutations the chief led the way to his house, with the grace and dignity of a hereditary prince. He is a man of some 70 years old, but hale and strong. His appearance is dignified, perhaps a little pompous, but his voice is gentle and his manners easy and affable. He was the only Druze sheikh I met in Haurân who used tobacco. He and the four others whom I had already visited are the leaders of the Druzes in this province.

Our first inquiries during the evening were as to the

practicability of penetrating the Lejah. The sheikh answered with hesitation, though he assured us there was no danger so long as a Druze was with us. After some time he advised us to go to Edhr'a, and proceed from that place to Dâma, and thence to Khûbab. This, he assured us, would take less time than the route we had proposed, and would also enable us to see the Lejah to more advantage. Mahmûd urged this plan upon us now, though he had agreed to another before our arrival. Sheikh Fâres 'Amer had strictly charged us not to enter the Lejah unless Sheikh Kâsem or some of his sons would go with us. When I proposed this to the sheikh he laughed, and said there would be no difficulty in entering from Edhr'a. We resolved to adopt the new plan of route, and before twenty-four hours we were able to see the reason of Sheikh Kâsem's hesitation; and we were also able to see that if we had gone to Dâma, as we first proposed, there is a strong probability that we should never have been permitted to leave it.

February 9th.—We spent this morning in examining the ruins of Nejrân, and in making a survey of the environs from the steeple of the old church. The notes I here wrote were afterwards taken from me, and it is only from memory I can give an account of this section of the Lejah. Nejrân is built near its southern border. Around the ruins, and so far as I could see from the W. to the N., there are no fields or open spaces: all is a wilderness of rocks. Toward the N.E., in the direction of 'Ahîry, are spots of soil which appear to be cultivated. In the interior of the Lejah I observed trees, principally the terebinth and wild olive.

Nejrân has still a large population of Druzes and Christians in about equal numbers, who occupy what remain of the ancient buildings. The ruins I estimated at nearly two miles in circumference. The most important building is a church, with two towers; it appears to have been latterly used as a mosque. Upon the walls are several Greek inscriptions. On one of them is the date 458 (A.D. 564), being the latest I have seen in the Haurân.

We mounted at 8.30, and, bidding adieu to our aged host,

took a path leading among the rocks, in a south-westerly direction, towards the village of Dûr. In half an hour we entered the plain, and turned westward, along the side of the Lejah. At 9.15 we reached a rocky tell covered with ruins, on the north side of which is a meadow, with a large fountain, called 'Ain Kirâtah. Seetzen here copied a Greek inscription from the door of a church. Gesenius suggests that this may be the site of *Coreathes*, an episcopal city, mentioned under the metropolis Bostra. The name certainly suggests the identity; and the extent of the ruins, among which is a large church, favours the supposition. Its situation beside a perennial fountain would always make it a place of importance in this thirsty land. About half an hour S.W. is Dûr, with many remains of former opulence and taste. From an inscription copied by Seetzen it appears that the ancient name was *Doraa*.

Forty minutes from 'Ain Kirâtah we crossed the dry bed of Wady Kunawât, which runs close to the side of the Lejah. A magnificent plain now opened before us, entirely free from stones and rocks. A few minutes on our left was the ruined village Ta'ârah on a tell; and some distance on our right we saw the square towers of another among the rocks of the Lejah. We continued our course in a straight line to Busr el-Harîry, which we reached in 1 h. 5 m. from 'Ain Kirâtah. Busr is situated on a tongue of rocks. The entrance is by a difficult winding path, crossing Wady Kunawât, and ascending a ledge of rugged crags. As we crossed this barrier, Mahmûd pointed out cliffs on the right, and said that on those two brothers and a nephew of Sheikh Fâres fell in the first battle with Ibrahim Pasha. On entering the village, which is inhabited by Muslims, we were received with scowling looks. We took no notice of this ungracious and unexpected reception, but rode to an open place beside a large tank, and dismounted. Two of our horses required to be shod, and this was our object in stopping. We soon discovered that we had left behind us, in the Druze country, friendly greetings and generous hospitality, and that we had entered the region of fanatical

Muslems, who only sought a favourable opportunity to cut our throats. The crowd that gathered round us rudely demanded our business, and, on requesting them to send for the blacksmith, not a man would move. Yûsef the muleteer went in search of one, and soon returned with him. Mr. Barnett had in the mean time gone round among the half-ruined houses, and was proceeding to the upper and principal part of the village, when he was peremptorily ordered back, and we were all told to remain where we were. Mahmûd could ill brook such commands from men he despised; but prudence whispered caution, and he told me we had better mount our horses, keep together, and proceed as soon as our business was done. One of our number rode out a few yards, but was met by a shower of stones from women and boys. The mob now numbered fifty or sixty, and began to press closely upon us, and to ask, or rather demand, to see our arms. Mahmûd was evidently uneasy; and I observed that a respectably dressed old man, apparently from Damascus, was endeavouring to keep the younger men away from us. So closely did the people press upon us, that we were compelled to keep our horses in motion to have a little open space in case of an attack. The village sheikh in his scarlet robe came up and invited us to take coffee, but in such a tone that we declined. He asked our object in coming here, and Mahmûd briefly answered him. After conversing a few minutes he walked away, without making any effort to check the insolence of the mob.

Our horses being ready, we rode off amid a shower of curses. As we were winding among the rocks on our way out, we met several horsemen, who rudely demanded where we were going. Mahmûd rode on and did not deign a reply. They drew up as we passed, and I heard one of them say, "Let them go." After we had cleared the rocks and entered the plain another larger party of horsemen demanded where we had been; but as our guide did not reply to such haughty questions amid the defiles, he treated them with manifest contempt in the open plain. He was, in

fact, in a towering passion, and, turning round, he cursed the whole village and its inhabitants for generations back.

The difficulty of penetrating the Lejah now began to be evident. Dâma I knew was filled with Muslems, who had been driven by the soldiers from their villages in the western plain, and who were still vowing vengeance against the power that had stripped them of their property and forced them to desert their homes. Their fanatical spirit, not disposed even in peaceful times to tolerate the presence of infidels, would delight in avenging their wrongs on such unhappy stragglers as might fall in their way. Under present circumstances, and in such a place as Dâma, they would not be restrained by any fear of consequences; and even should they hesitate to make an open attack, unseen hands could deal deadly blows from behind rocks. When I questioned Mahmûd about the practicability of going to Dâma, he only replied, "If they give us such a reception in Busr beside the plain, what may we expect in Dâma in the centre of the rocks?" I remarked that, if the people of Edhr'a were like those of Busr, we had better continue our course to the Christian village of Khûbab. He said there were Christians in Edhr'a, and that among them there was no danger. Would that his words had proved true!

Our course lay along a fine plain extending westward and southward far as the eye could see, with only dark masses of ruins and an occasional conical tell to break the uniformity. On our right the border of the Lejah, sweeping round in a circle, formed a kind of bay, and was as clearly defined as a rocky shore-line. Small towers occur at intervals along its rugged border, and traces of walls are here and there visible. The buildings of Edhr'a appeared in front, extending along the summit of a projecting tongue, and also running some distance toward the interior. Crossing Wady Kunawât, and ascending the ridge by a winding path, on which it was with difficulty our horses kept their feet, we surmounted the exterior barrier, and had before us a level spot, comparatively free from stones and rocks. Beyond this on a rising ground stand the ruins of Edhr'a. We

entered the south-eastern part of the city, and dismounted in the court of the Christian sheikh.

The projecting tongue of the Lejah, on which Edhr'a stands, is about a mile and a half wide, and two miles long. On its extremity is a ruined village. The situation is a strange one for a city of such magnitude—without springs, without access except over rocks and through defiles all but impracticable. All other advantages, however, seem to have been sacrificed to security and strength. An extensive view is obtained from the roofs of the houses, over the plain to the south and the wilderness of rocks northward. Shortly after our arrival we ascended to the terrace of the sheikh's residence, to enjoy the view and obtain some general idea of the extent and character of the ruins. The appearance of the city was far from inviting; the masses of shattered masonry could scarcely be distinguished from the rocks by which they are encompassed; and the whole is black, as if scathed by fire. A few square towers rise at intervals from the ruins, and some buildings of a better class still exist. The private houses that remain are low, massive, and gloomy, generally situated in courts several feet beneath the other remains, and many of them are encumbered by the fallen ruins of Roman structures. They are similar to those in the ancient cities among the mountains. On a few of them I observed short Greek inscriptions, which prove that they are, *at least*, as old as the Roman age. The ruins of the city cover an irregular oblong ridge about a mile in length by two-thirds of a mile in breadth. The present inhabitants reside in the ancient dwellings, selecting the apartments best fitted for comfort and security.

There are some circumstances which render the identification of this site a matter of difficulty; but I am inclined, after a careful consideration of the whole question, to regard it as the representative of EDREI. The reasons that have led me to this conclusion are chiefly its position, the antiquity of some of its private dwellings, and its subsequent history. Almost all geographers maintain that *Der'a*, a ruined town nearly 10 miles southward, is identical with Edrei. Either

name agrees with the Hebrew Edrei; and no argument can be drawn from the analogy of the names in favour of one more than the other.

The *situation* of Edhr'a is such as would naturally be selected for the site of a city in early and troublous times, and by the rulers of a warlike people. The principles of fortification were then little known, and the towns and villages were consequently placed in positions strong by nature. The advantageous position of Edhr'a in this respect has already been mentioned: and besides, while it occupied an almost impregnable site, it lay close to a plain of unrivalled richness. These considerations weigh strongly in my mind in favour of the supposition that it is identical with Edrei. Der'a, on the other hand, lies in the open plain, and has no natural advantages; I cannot believe such a site would have been selected for a royal city by the warlike Rephaim.

It was on the plain near this city that the decisive battle was fought between the Israelites and the armies of Og, king of Bashan. Edrei fell into the hands of the conquerors, and was given by Moses, with the whole kingdom, to the half-tribe of Manasseh. It probably did not remain long in their possession, for the name does not again occur in Scripture. May it not be that, in consequence of its position on the borders of a wild region infested by robbers, it was soon abandoned by the Israelites? The monuments now found in it show that it must have been a place of importance from the time the Romans took possession of Bashan.

After a hasty repast we set out, under the guidance of the Christian sheikh, to examine the ruins. I was anxious to see something of the features of a city so celebrated both on account of its antiquity and history. We visited the ruins of a church dedicated to St. Elias. There is a descent of 12 feet to the court, so high have the ruins been piled up on each side. Proceeding northward over mounds of rubbish, we reached a square tower, with two or three Greek inscriptions on and beside it. Here is a spacious quadrangle, encompassed by arcades, and having the centre filled with

heaps of ruins. It appears to have been designed by the Romans, in their usual splendid style, but, being afterwards in part ruined, it was repaired during the early centuries of Saracenic rule. We continued our walk to the church of St. George, situated on the rising ground at the northern extremity of the city. It is a square pile, having in front a paved court-yard, raised about 12 feet above the ground, and surrounded by a wall. The entrance is by a very low stone door, evidently taken from some more ancient structure; over it, on a tablet, is a long Greek inscription. The interior resembles the church of the monk Boheira at Busrah.

While we stood examining the exterior and trying to decipher the inscription, a crowd of some sixty or seventy persons collected round us. We paid little attention to this, as we had got accustomed to such evidences of popularity; so intent were Mr. Barnett and myself on our antiquarian work, that we did not hear the remarks passed or the threats uttered. Nikôla heard them, and became alarmed; but, just as he was about to warn us, we turned and went into the interior, while Mr. Quail, Nikôla, and the sheikh remained without; Mahmûd and our servants were in the house where we had left our luggage and arms. Shortly after we had entered Mr. Barnett was some yards in front of me, writing, and I stood, with my arms folded and my back against a column, looking at the interior. Ten or twelve men had followed us into the building. While I was standing I received a heavy blow on the shoulder from a club. I turned suddenly, for I was completely taken by surprise, as not a word had been spoken, or a question asked, or a sound heard. The club was again raised, and a stroke aimed at my head, but I fortunately warded it off with my arm. Several men, armed with clubs, now attempted to close upon me, but I leaped back, and demanded what they wanted; at the same time, throwing open my over-coat, I drew a pistol, which I had fortunately put in my belt at Busr el-Harîry. These things roused Mr. Barnett, who saw the danger of our position, and also drew a small pistol from

his pocket. The cowardly ruffians had watched their opportunity, and, when our little party was divided, they attacked us. They had thought we were unarmed, and, having two of us inside the church and two outside, they imagined it would be easy to accomplish their purposes. The moment, however, they saw our pistols they rushed out of the door; but we, seeing now the numbers outside, felt that our position was very critical. We, consequently, followed them, so as to aid our companions, but the instant we appeared we received a volley of stones. In the crowd I could not see either our friends or the sheikh, and I supposed they had escaped or had been driven off. There was no possibility of making my way to the door of the court, and to remain where I was would have been certain death; so, dashing forward, and pushing those before me to each side, I leaped over the wall in front. As I reached the ground a stone struck me on the back, and stunned me. I ascended a mound of rubbish, and turned upon my assailants, who were attempting to descend the wall. I again drew the pistol, and threatened to shoot the first who would descend. This checked them, and I attempted to reason with them, inquiring what we had done that they should thus beat and abuse us. The only reply was a savage yell, "Kill him! kill him!" A shower of stones followed, and one of them, striking me on the hand, carried away the whole flesh from the sides of two of my fingers. I now observed Mr. Quail and Nikôla, in the midst of the excited crowd, and Mr. Barnett, I saw, had got round to near where I stood. The whole fury of the attack seemed directed against me, and, while I was meditating what to do, I was struck with a stone on the back of the neck, but the thick collar of my coat deadened the blow. Fifteen or twenty men came close to the mound I occupied; all were afraid to close upon me, though the stones came thick and fast. My only chance was flight, for, even should I fire, it would not save my own life; and if I should kill or wound any of my assailants, I knew that not one of our party would leave the village alive. I ran across a field, as I thought, in the direction of the

house where Mahmûd and the servants were. In my way I met a respectably dressed man, whom I took for the sheikh of the village, and I entreated him to keep back the mob. He made no reply, and I continued my course. I saw an opening in the range of houses before me, and entered it, but, to my horror, found it shut up by a high wall. I wheeled round again, and ran to the top of a mound of rubbish; here, however, some twenty or thirty men were close upon me, and flight seemed no longer possible. Before I had time to consider what I should do, the stroke of a stone on the back and another on the head brought me to the ground. Those that were before afraid to approach now rushed on me *en masse*. Though stunned and exhausted, I was perfectly conscious, and saw one fellow deliberately aiming a blow at my head with his club. I received it on my left arm, and leaped to my feet. A vigorous effort drove a few of my assailants to some distance, and again I seized my pistol, and the crowd began to retreat, but at that moment a man from behind threw his arms round me, and entreated me not to fire. I cast him off, after a hard struggle, but he still grasped the pistol, and prayed me not to use it, or we should all be murdered. Looking at him, I recognised the man I had met a few minutes previously. "What am I to do then?" I demanded. "Give me the pistol, and I will save you." He looked honest, and I thought my life would be sacrificed at any rate; so, with a quick motion of my finger, I struck off the caps and gave up the pistol. This precaution I took lest it should be used against myself. Having got it, he told me to run. "Where?" I asked. He pointed out the path, and away I ran, while he restrained the mob. I soon overtook Mr. Quaill and Nikôla, who were likewise running, and the old sheikh was trying to restrain their pursuers. I inquired for Mr. Barnett, and at that moment he came up without hat or shoes, the blood flowing from his head. We ran along together, guided by some men, and soon reached our house.

Our appearance, wounded and bleeding, surprised Mahmûl and our servants, and they quickly snatched up the arms

prepared for defence. Mahmûd rushing out confronted the angry mob, who were coming, as they said, to murder us all. He succeeded in turning them back ; but as they went away they were heard to say we could not leave the village without their knowledge, and as soon as we attempted to go they would finish their work.

We had now leisure to examine our wounds and consider our position. My bruises were comparatively slight : I was much stunned, but not seriously cut. Mr. Quail had received a severe cut in the arm ; but Mr. Barnett's injuries were the most serious of all. He had got several blows on the head and face, and was so much exhausted that he could not stand ; and we had great doubts of his being able to sit on horseback, even should we manage to escape. I discovered that a small leather case, in which I carried my note-books, letters, and the coins and medals I had collected, had been lost in the struggle.

As the evening advanced some of the more aged men of the village came to us, and attempted to excuse themselves by saying that the assault had been the work of a few boys. There was no use disputing this point, or irritating them still more by stating our opinion. Mahmûd, however, was not sparing of his reproaches, and he threatened them with the vengeance of the Druze chiefs, under whose guardianship we travelled. I requested him to let the matter rest, and said to them, if they would restore the missing articles, we would perhaps overlook the assault. A few minutes afterwards a man came in and brought my hat and one of my note-books—fortunately that which contained the whole of my notes up to the time of our arrival in Nejrân.

We held several councils with Mahmûd and the Christian sheikh, and it was agreed we should attempt to escape at midnight, but that our intention should be kept secret. Both our guide and the sheikh considered that, if an attempt were made to go in daylight, a crowd would collect, and one would excite another until, probably, lives would be sacrificed. Had the village been in the plain, we would not have feared them ; but in the midst of rocks and defiles

horses are worse than useless. Several of the Muslims remained till after 10 o'clock, watching our movements. We ordered the servants to spread our beds, and we lay down, telling the guide and muleteer to do the same. When all was thus quiet, our visitors went away, and the door of the court-yard was barred.

We were soon on our feet again. Coffee was prepared, and after taking a little Mr. Barnett felt better and ready for the road. Every preparation was made in silence: the beds were packed, the horses saddled, and all got ready. A knock was just then heard at the gate. Every light was withdrawn from the court in a moment, and we feared a return of our unwelcome visitors; but it was the old sheikh and a monk who had been out to examine the road, and see if all was clear and quiet. The sheikh's two sons, who were to be our guides, now came forward, with their guns slung on their shoulders. We mounted in the court-yard and sallied forth. The sheikh with a little oil-lamp guided us along a tortuous lane, shut in on both sides by high walls. The servants went first, Mr. Barnett followed, and then the others, with Mahmûd in the rear. In passing a sharp corner Mr. Barnett's horse turned fiercely upon mine, and both animals neighed loudly. The sheikh made a quick gesture for silence. It was an anxious moment, as we thought we could hear commotion in the houses around. We rode quickly and noiselessly over a mound of earth, and were soon clear of the ruins. Here we breathed more freely as the sheikh whispered his salâm. We followed our two guides in darkness and silence. They led us a little eastward from the ruins, and then turned to the N., and continued their course parallel to the city. I could not understand this movement, and, fearing some treachery, I told Mahmûd to ride in front, while I rode close behind him, watching the motions of the two men as closely as the darkness would permit. Our path became more and more rugged. We could not see it, for both soil and stones were black; but we had evidence of it in the painful efforts of our horses as they scrambled over rocks and through fissures. I observed that we were again

approaching the ruins, and, as near as I could judge, the very spot where the attack had been made upon us. I feared the worst, but it was useless to speak. We could not advance a step without guidance. Just as we had reached the northern end of the ruins, apparently only about 100 yards distant, we heard a furious barking of dogs close on our right. The thought occurred to all that we were betrayed, and that in such a place escape was impossible. Not a word was uttered, however, and the guides went on. We descended into a deep ravine, through which even our horses seemed to feel their way more cautiously. Passing this, the dogs were left behind; but as we surmounted the opposite bank, another attack was made on us by these watchful animals. We struck westward, as I could see by the stars, and the object of our guides in bringing us this route began to be intelligible. A few minutes more we entered what seemed to be the line of an ancient road, with rocks piled up on each side, and the interval partially filled with water. After proceeding a quarter of an hour along this, Mahmûd requested me to give the guides a present, and as he spoke the words my horse scrambled over a ruinous wall, and his feet descended on the plain. Never did I give an order for the payment of a *bakkshish* with so much pleasure.

We had not proceeded far when we heard a barking of dogs, and the sound of commotion in the town. We supposed they had discovered our escape, and were preparing for pursuit; but the broad plain was before us, our hearts were light, and we cared not now for all the murderous bands of the Lejah. Our course was N. by W., along a good road. We saw the dark outline of the village of Shûkrah, on the borders of the rocks, some distance on the right. We turned due N., and then a little eastward, guiding our course by the stars. The road, which had gradually become indistinct and ill-defined, was no longer visible; and we were some time wandering about ere we discovered it. Mahmûd had in the mean time struck a light, and we were all so intently engaged in our search after the lost road, that

it was a considerable time ere we observed that we had turned back, and were proceeding again to Edhr'a. This we all saw from the stars; but Mahmûd would scarcely believe us, and to convince him we examined a compass. Turning again northward, we wandered on, Mahmûd carrying a light in his hand, and examining the path. We struck a road leading more to the eastward, and ere long got entangled among rocks and ravines. Here we resolved to halt till daylight; and selecting a small amphitheatre, encompassed by rocks, we dismounted.

After remaining about an hour, Mahmûd mounted and rode off alone in search of the path. He came back, and requested us to follow him. We did so, and in about fifteen minutes we rode past the half-ruined village of Mujeidel. It is situated, as I afterwards learned, on the edge of the Lejah, at a place where the rocks shoot out into the plain. N.W. of it, and likewise on the border of the Lejah, is Muhajjeh. Passing Mujeidel, we continued our course for an hour, every moment getting more and more entangled in the rocks. We suffered much from cold, and our wounds and bruises gave us intense pain. Some uneasiness was felt also lest we should penetrate too far into this inhospitable region, and fall among the lawless Arabs that dwell amid its fastnesses. Mahmûd at last called a halt, and expressed his determination to wait for daylight. The black rocks rose up round us in broken masses, appearing still more gloomy and rugged from the darkness of the night. The incessant barking of the wild dogs, and the mournful cry of the jackal, mingled with the fierce howl of the hyæna, were heard on every side—at one time in the distance, and at another so close as to make our horses start and tremble.

Daylight at last came—not with the slow, stealing step of the West, but with the swiftness of Eastern climes. The mountains of Haurân stood out dark and gloomy from the bright red background; while the snowy summit of Hermon was soon tinged with golden hues. The wild features of the scenery soon revealed themselves: heaps

of huge black stones, like piled-up ruins, and mounds of naked rock shattered and torn into a thousand forms, with deep fissures running between them, and here and there little patches of stony ground intervening. We could see but a short distance ; and there was no path or landmark to direct us. This western side of the Lejah is different in its character from the eastern and southern sections. It is covered with tells of basalt, in some cases isolated, in others united, like miniature mountain-ranges. Between are deep ravines, and open spots from which the stones have been taken away, and the soil left in a state for cultivation. But these fields are mere patches. The roads are not only difficult, but so intricate that, without a guide, it is impossible to go from one village to another.

February 10th.—Mahmūd went to the top of one of the highest mounds, and I followed him. Several villages were in view, with their dark towers and walls. A cry from Yûsef the muleteer, from the top of a still loftier tell in advance, was now heard ; and descending we went toward him, and found that our little cavalcade was again in the right road, and the village of Khûbab not far distant. On gaining the spot where Yûsef stood, I obtained a commanding view over nearly the whole Lejah ; and such a picture of wild desolation I had never before looked on. The whole plain I could only compare to the ruins of a Cyclopean city, deserted and prostrate, whose scathed and shapeless fragments cover the ground. There was not one pleasing feature. The trees that grew up among the rocks in the distance had no fresh look about them ; and as they are thinly scattered, they give a more haggard appearance to the scene. Strange as it may seem, however, this forbidding region is studded with deserted cities and villages, in all of which the dwellings are solidly built, and manifestly of remote antiquity ; and in not a few of them are monuments of a later and more polished age. Sûr and Jêdal and Hamîr were pointed out to me on the right, and Dâma was in view in the centre of the wilderness of rocks. Many others were visible in the same direction, whose names I did not learn. Before us, half an hour

distant, stood Khūbab, on two tells, and beyond it was a long line of towns and villages, standing just within the borders of the Lejah. Setting out at a quick pace, we reached Khūbab at 7½ o'clock.

Here we stopped to feed our horses and obtain some refreshment. The distance from Edhr'a is about 11 geographical miles, or nearly four hours. Khūbab is a large village inhabited by Christians; the sheikh, however, is a Druze. The houses are ancient, and resemble those at Burāk. There is an easy access to the village from the plain.

At 8.45 we mounted and set out for Deir 'Aly, intending, if possible, to go on to Damascus without stopping. On leaving the ruins, we entered the plain which extends along the northern side of the Lejah. It is rich, and partially cultivated. On the N., nearly three hours distant, is the low black ridge of Khiyârah; and beyond it, on the E., the spurs from Mâni'a run out toward the desert. Our road lay along the border of the plain, within a few hundred yards of the Lejah, the side of which resembles a Cyclopean wall in ruins. The most direct road to Damascus from Khūbab is N. by W. to Ghubâghib, and thence along the Hâj route; but we selected that by Deir 'Aly as safer for our guide, who dreaded the Kurdish soldiers. We passed in succession the deserted villages of Melthah, Eib, and Kureim, all situated within the border of the Lejah. From the last the border begins to turn more eastward, and is greatly indented, until it reaches Sh'aârah, a considerable town standing on a promontory. Thence it turns due E. and runs in a winding course to *Musmeih*, four Roman miles, and to Burāk about four more.

Sh'aârah and Musmeih were visible, and we regretted that time and circumstances did not permit us to visit them.

TOPOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE LEJAH.

The Lejah is of an irregular oval shape, about 22 miles long by 14 wide. Its eastern side is like the arc of a

bow, having the ruins of Burâk on its northern extremity, and those of Bureiky near the southern. The distance between the two is about 12 miles. Along the greater part of it runs Wady Liwa. The southern border is a waving line running from Bureiky, 5 miles, to Nejran, and thence sweeping round 9 miles to Edhr'a. On the western side, between Edhr'a and Tibny, there are deep indentations and bold projections; but the general direction is N. by E., and the distance 9 miles. From Tibny the border proceeds N.E. to Sh'aârah, 8 miles, and E. 6 miles more to Burâk. The circumference of the Lejah is thus about 58 geographical miles. Its border is as clearly defined as the line of a rocky coast, which it very much resembles. At the south-eastern corner, between Tell Sheihân and Nejran, the stony ground extends to the base of the mountains, and the border is not, consequently, so clear. The surface is elevated from 20 to 30 feet above the surrounding plain. At a little distance it appears as flat as a sea; the only hills in it are Amâra and Sumeid. The former is the loftier, and has an elevation of about 300 feet.

The physical features of the Lejah are very remarkable. It is composed of black basalt, which appears to have issued from pores in the earth in a liquid state, and to have flowed out until the plain was almost covered. Before cooling, its surface was agitated by some powerful agency; and it was afterwards shattered and rent by internal convulsions and vibrations. There are in many places deep fissures, with rugged broken edges, while in other places are jagged heaps of rock that seem not to have been sufficiently heated to flow, but were forced upwards, and then rent and shattered. The rock is filled with air-bubbles; it is as hard as flint, and emits a sharp metallic sound when struck. I did not observe any columnar or crystallized basalt.

The eastern and central portions of the Lejah have a more uniform rocky surface than the western and southern. Between Mujeidel and Khûbab are mounds of rock with intermediate patches of soil strewn with boulders and sharp angular stones. These features continue to near Jedal,

three miles from the plain; but from this place inwards "the ground becomes uneven, the pasturing places less frequent, the rocks higher, and the road more difficult." In the vicinity of Dâma so rough and rugged is the country, so deep the gullies and ravines, and so lofty the overhanging rocks, that the whole is a labyrinth which none but the Arabs can penetrate. Burckhardt's words convey a good idea of the interior. "In the interior parts of the Lejah the rocks are in many places cleft asunder, so that the whole hill appears shivered and in the act of falling down; the layers are generally horizontal, from 6 to 8 feet or more in thickness, sometimes covering the hills, and inclining to their curve, as appears from the fissures which often traverse the rock from top to bottom." The hills here referred to are only mounds 40 or 50 feet in height at the most.

It is worthy of remark how minutely this description accords with that of Josephus. He says of the inhabitants of this region that it was extremely difficult to conquer them, or to check their depredations, "as they had neither towns nor fields, but dwelt in caves that served as a refuge both for themselves and their flocks. They had besides cisterns of water and well-stored granaries, and were thus able to remain long in obscurity and to defy their enemies. The doors of their caves are so narrow that but one man can enter at a time, while within they are incredibly large and spacious. The ground above is almost a plain, but it is covered with rugged rocks, and is difficult of access, except when a guide points out the paths. These paths do not run in a straight course, but have many windings and turns."

Some of the ruined cities in the Lejah are of considerable extent, and the beauty of their architectural ornaments show former wealth and importance. Edhr'a, Burâk, and Nejrân, have been described. Dâma appears to have been the largest town in the interior, though its position seems, of all others, the most uninviting. It has, according to Burckhardt, about 300 houses, most of them in good preservation. He observed sculptured vine-leaves and grapes on a door-

way, resembling those at Kunawât. But next to Edhr'a the largest and most important city is *Musmeih*. Its ruins are three miles in circuit, and contain many buildings of considerable size and beauty. Burckhardt says that its Doric temple is one of the most elegant buildings in the Haurân. On the side of the door is a long Greek inscription, from which we learn that the name of the city was *Phæno*, and that it was the capital of Trachonitis. I have already stated that it is the *Ænos* of the Peutinger Tables, the initial letter having been either accidentally omitted or obliterated. The Roman road which we followed from Suweideh to Bozrah, formerly ran northward to Phæno and Damascus, and traces of it still exist in many places.

Our way now led across a rich plain which extends along the northern side of the Lejah. It is bounded on the N. by Jebel Khiyârah. On the whole of this plain, at the place where we crossed it, and eastward to the path we had followed in going to Burâk, there is not a town or village, nor, so far as I could see, are there any ruins. Farther westward, however, near the Hâj road, there are many villages, some of which are inhabited. And yet this plain has every appearance of having been at one time carefully cultivated. It is evident that from the earliest ages this district was exposed to the incursions of the desert hordes, and none of the settled inhabitants would venture to erect their dwellings upon it. They built their villages within the rocky fastnesses, and a few of them on the rugged slopes of Jebel Khiyârah: they were thus secure against sudden attacks, and were also sufficiently near the plain to enable them to till the rich soil. In the centre of the plain we crossed a stream whose source is at Sunamein on the Hâj road; it flows eastward during the winter, and falls into the Liwa. There are several fountains on the border of the Lejah between Sh'aârah and Musmeih, which also send a small tributary to Liwa.

Crossing the plain we swept round the eastern base of

Jebel Khiyârah, and had on our right a low ridge, an offshoot from Jebel Mâni'a. On the latter are several deserted villages. At this place are traces of the Roman road. Having surmounted a gentle eminence, we came in sight of Deir 'Aly, with its orchards, gardens, and green fields. It was pleasing again to see evidences of security, industry, and permanent habitation, after the general desolation of the Haurân. The houses of Deir 'Aly are new, and constructed, like those in Damascus, of wood and sun-dried bricks. We reached the village at 1.40, and received a hospitable welcome from the Druze sheikh.

February 11th.—As our guide and muleteer did not wish to venture nearer Damascus, we dismissed them, well satisfied with their faithful services; and, having engaged fresh animals, we set out for Damascus. Our road lay along the base of Mâni'a, in a north-westerly direction. We had on our right the lofty conical peak of Tell Mâni'a. It forms a conspicuous object over the surrounding country, both to the N. and S. I had ascended it on a previous occasion, and found the summit covered with the ruins of an ancient castle. From this commanding point I was able to make a survey of the central section of the *Pharpar*. We crossed the Pharpar by a fine bridge at the village of Kesweh. It is a large and rapid stream, though two canals are led off from it some miles farther up; one of them taking water to the plain of Damascus, and the other conveying a supply to several villages on the plain of Haurân. The river approaches Kesweh in a deep and tortuous channel, lined with poplars and fruit-trees. On its southern side is a rocky plateau extending nearly as far E. as the Hâj road, where it gives place to a fertile plain called Ard el-Khiyârah.

The Hâj road crosses the river by the bridge of Kesweh, and runs over the plain in a direction S. by W., passing Khan Denûn, distant $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile; the gap in Jebel Khiyârah, 5 miles farther; Ghubâghib, 4 miles; Surnamein, 5 miles; Eshmiskîn, 13 miles; and then Mezarîb, 6 miles.

Crossing the bridge and ascending the steep bank by a paved road, we had the large village of Kesweh on our left;

behind it rises Jebel el-Aswad. The road runs along its eastern base for $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile. On the right is a rich and beautiful vale, through which the 'Awaj winds, sweeping to the N. round the projecting spurs of Jebel Mâni'a. After running in this direction for about half a mile it turns eastward down the valley to Nejha. In half an hour from Kesweh we commenced the ascent of the eastern section of Jebel el-Aswad. The elevation at this place does not exceed 300 feet. On the right it extends in a broken chain to Nejha, its greatest height being not more than 500 feet. Its sides have an easy slope, and are covered with boulders of basalt. In half an hour we had crossed the hills and entered the plain of Damascus, over which we rode to the city.

CHAPTER XV.

TOUR IN LEBANON; VISIT TO THE CEDARS AND
BA'ALBEK.

Ride from Bludân to Zahleh — Christians of Zahleh — Route over Lebanon — Wild scenery and caverns of Wady Tarshîsh — Residence of the mountain princes — Beyrout — The roads and sculptures of Nahr el-Kelb — The valley of Nahr el-Kelb — Its sources — The natural bridge — The Temple of Venus at Apheca — Source of the river Adonis — Adventure with the Metkewely — Distant view of the cedars — Scenery of Wady Kadîsha — The Cedars — View from the summit of Lebanon — Topography of the eastern slopes — Bâ'albek — Ride along the Roman road to Bludân.

July 29th, 1853.—I LEFT my summer residence in Bludân with the intention of proceeding direct to Beyrout, where business called me, and returning by the cedars and Bâ'albek. I did not wish to follow the ordinary road, which has been often travelled, and has little of interest; I consequently chose a route equally short with the other, and much more picturesque. I was accompanied as far as Beyrout by two young friends, besides my servant and muleteers.

We rode down the Bâ'albek road, along the base of the cliffs that overhang Wady Zebdâny, and in forty minutes crossed the rivulet which rises at 'Ain Hauwar, half an hour on the right, and, flowing down the valley, waters Zebdâny and its lovely plain. We continued in the same course, ascending the bleak mountain. A fine stream murmured along its stony bed in a ravine on our right. The view eastward, as we approached the summit of the ridge, was very grand. The sun was rising over the lofty peaks of Antilebanon, and their jagged summits, clothed with juniper, stood out in bold relief from the brilliant background, while

bright beams, like floods of light, poured through the ravines. The whole scene, however, has a sad appearance of desolation, for, though the slopes are in part cultivated, the absence of verdure at this season, and the want of trees on the low grounds, render the landscape bleak and dreary.

We crossed the summit, and descended into a picturesque valley, whose sides are clothed with dwarf oak. Crossing it, and skirting a wooded ridge, we turned to the left, and entered a wady with gently-sloping sides covered with oak and coppice. As we descended we turned again more to the northward, and the scenery became wilder. The bare limestone cliffs rise overhead, leaving between them but a narrow rugged track for a winter-torrent and summer-path. At 8.30 we entered the Bukâ'a. Half a mile on our right was the village of Mâsy, and the river Yahfûfeh bursts from its sublime glen a short distance beyond. On the slope on our left stands Deir el-Ghuzâl, containing the ruins of a temple. In thirty-five minutes we reached Reyâk, near the banks of the river, and saw, a few minutes to the eastward, another village called 'Aly en-Nahry.

Our course was now straight across the plain to Kerak, which we reached at 10.50. This village contains the traditional tomb of Noah, measuring 70 yards in length! Five minutes afterwards we entered Mu'allakah, finely situated at the entrance of a sublime glen. Passing through its crowded and bustling streets, we crossed the River Berdûny, and turned up along its right bank; in twenty minutes more we reached Zahleh.

Zahleh is the capital of Lebanon. It is said to contain, with its suburb Mu'allakah, about 10,000 inhabitants, and it is the principal market for the surrounding country. As we approached it from the Bukâ'a we admired the vineyards that surround it, clothing the whole slopes of the mountains, and the wild glens that furrow their sides; and now, in riding through them, we were astonished at their great fruitfulness. The plain below is abundantly watered. The people scarcely deserve such a splendid country, for they are notorious for pride and insolence.

We mounted again at 1.40, and proceeded up the steep mountain-side, along the right bank of the ravine. The view is sublime. Here a spur projects into the Bukâ'a from Sunnîn, and is partly separated from the main chain by a rugged wady running parallel to the mountains. We crossed this wady, and stopped for ten minutes at a khan on its western bank. Starting again, and toiling up the steep zigzag path, we reached the summit of Lebanon at 3.40. The scene which now burst upon our view was of unusual grandeur. On our left rose Jebel Kuneiyseh, and on our right, higher still, the snow-capped Sunnîn. Before us was a glen, wide, deep, and wild, running westward, between cliffs and peaks, like a gash in the mountain-side, until it opened a view of the far-distant sea. Near us were rounded masses of red sandstone, while sharp peaks of white limestone here and there towered over them—the two strata seemed struggling for the mastery. From the porous sandstone fountains gush, encompassed by shrubberies of rhododendron, intermixed with the bracken.

The head of this glen, called Wady Tarshîsh, was upon our right, running up toward Sunnîn, and we turned to the northward and wound round it by a steep, and in places dangerous, path. We then turned down along its right bank. At 3.40 we reached a ravine like a fissure in the rock, and having heard of a celebrated cave here, called Hûwet Tarshîsh, we dismounted to examine it. After clambering down the precipice, we came to the entrance of a cavern, not of great depth, but apparently running far into the mountain-side. From this we crept through a natural tunnel in the rock, and found another cave of great depth and extent. It was impossible to enter, as the sides are smooth and perpendicular, but we threw down stones, and heard them bounding from ledge to ledge, until at last they plunged into water with a noise like thunder. Passing round the side of this fearful pit, we reached a fissure in the precipice, and saw before us a little glen of singular wildness. It is encompassed by walls of naked rock, the strata of which are horizontal, and resemble layers of stones in

some Cyclopean structure. The strata being of different degrees of hardness, mouldings and string-courses, like those of Gothic architecture, run round the sides. The bottom of the glen was covered with the rich foliage of the tobacco-plant.

We resumed our journey at 5 o'clock, and after an hour and a quarter's ride along the brow of Wady Tarshish we reached a little house tenanted by a solitary old man. Here we encamped for the night. It was a wild and lonely spot, far removed from human habitation. In the gloom of night the mountains around seemed loftier and the glens deeper, while the rocks and precipices rose on each side in dark and threatening masses.

July 30th.—At 5.30 we were in the saddle, and all trace of our encampment had gone, save the trampled turf where the horses had been picketed, and the smoking ashes on the hearth. We rode over a rocky eminence, and descended a winding path among huge limestone crags to the hamlet of Merûj. The name is descriptive, for the limestone gives way to the sandstone, and green "meadows" surround the village, shaded by noble oaks and tall pines. It stands on the summit of a ridge whose sides slope down into romantic glens. That on the north is Wady Biskinta, containing a tributary of Nahr el-Kelb; the other is Wady Tarshish, running on in its course to the river of Beyrout. Continuing along the summit of the ridge, we came at 7 o'clock to the head of a ravine, descending on the right to Nahr el-Kelb. On its left side, clinging to the steep bank, is the village of Shuweir, while over it, on the brow of a projecting cliff, stands the Convent of St. Elias. For half an hour more we followed the path through pine forests, and then reached a spot where the road branches—one branch turning southward along the summit of the ridge to Brummâna, Beit Miry, and Deir el-Kul'ah: the other, turning to the right, descends to Bukfeiya. From this point we had a glorious view of Wady Salîma, and part of the Metn beyond it. The whole of this region is wooded, the sandstone ridges with pine, and the limestone peaks with oak

and wild pear; while the terraced slopes and glens are clothed with the mulberry and the vine. On the opposite side of the wady the village of Salima stands on the rugged slope, and in its centre rise up the grey walls of the large ruinous palace, once the residence of the mountain princes.

We turned to the right, and descending along a road like a staircase in ruins reached Bukfeiya, one of the most picturesque villages in Lebanon. The houses are not huddled together like those of Antilebanon or the plains, but are scattered with pleasing irregularity among gardens of mulberry-trees. Frowning cliffs, to whose rugged sides the oak clings, shoot up behind it, while below, the mountain-side descends, now in terraced slopes covered with foliage, now in precipices of naked rock, to the glen of Nahr el-Kelb. As we rode through the village the palace of the Emîr Hyder, the present ruler of Lebanon, was on our right, surrounded by well-kept gardens, while the light verandas of the house of his secretary rose over the plantations on our left. The view to the N. and W. is almost inconceivably grand. The ravine of the Lycus is seen, shut in by cliffs, and the hills and peaks above are crowned with castle-like convents, and their sides dotted with villages. Away below, the coast-line of the Mediterranean, with its bold promontories and graceful-curving bays, extends northward far as the eye can see; while on the S. it is shut in by the long, low headland on which stand the white buildings of Beyrout.

We sat long beneath the spreading boughs of a giant oak admiring this gorgeous scene. Vines laden with fruit hung in festoons overhead, and fig-trees covered the terraces around. Breakfast was spread on the rock beside us, and what with the morning ride, mountain air, and glorious scenery, we felt inclined to linger over the viands. Nearly a year afterwards I spent a day on this spot in company of three English friends; and though some of them had wandered over most of Europe, they confessed they had never seen such a glorious panorama.

After an hour's rest we mounted, and rode down the

steep mountain-side. The road, bad enough above, became much worse. Nature had strewn over it large blocks of limestone, and time had smoothed their surfaces and sharpened their spike-like projections. Intervals of comparatively level ground had been left between them, where animals could have got tolerable footing; but these had been carefully filled with sharp fragments of stone, set upon their edges, between which our poor horses sought in vain for a spot on which to plant their feet. They slipped and staggered, and writhed in pain when a foot got twisted or wedged between the stones. Time and patience, however, overcame difficulties; and after a painful march of two hours and a half we reached the beach, beside the stream of Antellyas. It was now nearly two years since I had been refreshed by the sight of the rolling waves and dashing surf; and my heart warmed at the view of the sea. Thoughts of early days swelled upon my memory, when my home was by the ocean in a far-distant land, and when the hoarse voice of the storm-tossed billows used to lull me to slumber in the long winter nights. In two hours more we rode into Beyrout.

August 2nd.—At 6.30 I passed through the old gateway of Beyrout, glad to escape from the heat. I followed the road over the Roman bridge, and along the Bay of St. George, and forded the River Antellyas where its waters touch the waves of the Mediterranean. I passed the half-ruined khan at the end of the sandy beach, and dismounted on the banks of Nahr el-Kelb.

The road before reaching the mouth of this classic stream is carried round the side of a perpendicular cliff, against the base of which the waves are lashed into showers of spray. The rock has been excavated, to afford a passage. On the highest part lies a Roman milestone with an imperfect inscription; and on the side of a deep cutting on the bank of the river is another inscription on a tablet, telling how the road was repaired in the days of the Emperor Antoninus. Higher up on the cliff are traces of a far more ancient and interesting road, on the side of

which are time-worn bas-reliefs—the work of Assyrian and Egyptian sovereigns. I spent some time in a close examination of these singular monuments. I had visited them before, and I have visited them since, but I will not here trouble my reader with any historical or antiquarian disquisition.

On returning to the river I found breakfast laid beneath the shade of the bridge. It was a lonely spot. The precipices rose like walls on each side, shutting in the narrow vale with its fringe of trees, and green turf, and murmuring river hurrying on to the sea. Above the bridge the ravine becomes narrower and wilder. Dwarf oaks, shrubs, and creeping plants cling to the rocky banks, and add softness and beauty to grand features. An ancient aqueduct, in part excavated in the rock, but mostly supported on arches of masonry, winds along the right bank; and long stalactites hang from its arches and from the projecting ledges below.

At 11.15 I was again in the saddle. While considering what road I should follow, a portly monk, the superior of a neighbouring convent, rode up, and gave me all requisite information. The worthy friar had a jolly, good-humoured look; and when he proposed that I should remain here till the evening, and that we should then journey together to the Cedars, I felt half inclined to consent. But the loss of a day was too much to give even for the pleasure of such society. The ecclesiastics here have a different appearance from those in other parts of the country. They are conscious of possessing not only freedom but power. The subdued and cringing mien they assume in other districts, where Islam is predominant, is not seen in Lebanon. Secure in their mountain home, and in the obedience, if not in the love, of their people, they fear no foe, and bow to no superior. It is a pity, however, that arrogance and assumption should take the place of fawning humility. These are the invariable results of power when combined with ignorance. The priesthood of Lebanon, as a class, are ignorant, bigoted, and overbearing. They consider

their whole duties to consist in keeping up the wealth and state of their convents and churches, and going through their multitudinous services. The education of the people they never think of; and the idea of imparting religious instruction is out of the question. It is true a few schools have been established, but these are supported by the people. Protestant missionaries have done more for the advancement of education within the short period of twenty years than the priesthood of Lebanon have done during centuries.

I followed the right bank of the river for ten minutes, and then struck up the side of the glen by a difficult zigzag path. On gaining the summit, our way led through terraced vineyards and groves of fig-trees and mulberries. At 12 o'clock we passed the village of Zûk, and turned to the right toward the brow of the ravine, as we wished to descend to J'aïta, and visit the large cave beside it, from which the waters of Nahr el-Kelb burst forth. In winter other torrents run down from the mountains above, and swell the stream; but in summer the upper waters are exhausted in the irrigation of gardens and fields. We missed the path, and ascended a conical peak crowned by the Convent of St. Elias. I only discovered the mistake after I had scaled the steep hill, and when from beneath the convent walls I saw J'aïta 1000 feet below me in the bottom of a ravine. The splendour of the prospect in some measure made up for my disappointment. I had a bird's-eye view of the sublime glen. Its sides are in many places naked cliffs several hundred feet high, while over these are terraced acclivities like broad stairs leading to the summits of the hills.

I rode along a narrow sandstone ridge, with the village of Antûrah in a vale on my left. The slopes on each side are clothed with forests of pines. Passing the sandstone strata I ascended a steep and rugged slope strewn with blocks of limestone, with here and there little fields and vineyards. At 2.40 I reached Ajiltûn. A guide now became necessary. Narrow mountain-paths intersect each other; and though the general line of route may be clear enough, the wild

ravines and cliffs that run across the line make it difficult even for a native to follow the road. A guide, being procured, we mounted at 3 o'clock.

The scenery of the country between Ajiltûn and Meirûba is the grandest and most remarkable I have seen. Innumerable ravines run down into the deep glen; and their sides, with the ridges between them, are studded with peaks of white limestone, which sometimes rise up like huge teeth. The rocks assume various fantastic forms. In one place the horizontal strata are worn away at the edges, and resemble a pile of cushions. In other places there is a long stalk with a broad top like a table. One of this form I noticed near Feitirûn, and I estimated its height at 50 feet. In many places they are ribbed like the pipes of an organ. Every patch of soil is carefully cultivated. In more than one place have I seen stubble, where wheat had grown, in grottoes, and under arched cliffs.

It was through this wild region the soldiers of Ibrahim Pasha were forced to retreat from the coast in 1841. The warlike mountaineers, supplied with arms by the English fleet, harassed them, and shot hundreds from behind rocks. A perusal of the histories of Napier and Hunter had made me familiar with these scenes of blood; and the graphic sketches I had heard from Mr. Wood in Damascus excited in me a more lively interest. Mr. Wood bore a conspicuous part in those stirring scenes, and contributed much, by his intimate knowledge of the country and the people, to the success of the English arms.

After a fatiguing ride I reached Meirûba, and encamped for the night at a fountain above the village.

August 3rd.—A cold wind blew round my tent this morning, and compelled me to have recourse to an extra coat. What a change from Beyrout! I felt as if new life had already been infused into me; and yet as the chill morning blast swept past I almost wished the sun had overtopped Sunnîn. Meirûba is finely situated on the right bank of Wady Salîb, which has here terraced sides, covered with mulberry groves; but a short distance farther down

the cliffs approach so close as scarcely to afford a passage for the foaming torrent. This stream is the highest tributary of Nahr el-Kelb.

Having sent the muleteers and luggage by the straight road to Afka, I set out, accompanied by my servant, to visit the places of interest round the sources of the Lycus. Our way was along the right bank of Wady Salib, a few hundred feet above the bed of the stream. On our left rose lofty precipices, over which towered the highest peaks of Lebanon. On the opposite side of the glen is a rocky ridge covered with oaks. At 7.50 I reached the small village of Harajiyah, and beside it I observed the largest walnut-tree I had ever seen. In forty minutes more we passed through Fereiya, situated in the head of the valley where several streams meet. We here turned to the right, and ascended the opposite ridge, winding up the rugged slope among loose stones and masses of limestone. In twenty minutes we reached the summit beside the ruins of Kul'aat Fakra, a square tower of Roman origin, with massive walls. Over the doorway is a Greek inscription, but so much broken and defaced that I was not able to copy it. On the same side of the building, near the angle, is another inscription, which informs us that the castle was founded in the year A.D. 43.

South of this building, down the rocky slope, is a much more extensive ruin. Here are traces of a temple with a portico of massive columns, and a large enclosed area in front. The walls are of great thickness, constructed of large squared blocks, and the columns are four feet in diameter. Near it are the ruins of a bath, fragments of the marble pavement of which exist beneath the rubbish. In the rocks around are some excavated tombs, and there are likewise the foundations of several other buildings.

This place, though far removed from human habitation, was alive with groups of men and women; children, too, played around the bases of cliffs, and scampered along the meadows that line a little stream. It was the harvest season, and the villagers had for the time deserted their

houses to bivouac on the thrashing-floors. Gaily-dressed sheikhs were dashing about from field to field on their horses, while the more aged were perched on a stone or a rocky ledge, with umbrellas to protect them from the sun's rays. It is the custom in Lebanon for a large portion of the inhabitants to spend weeks on the thrashing-floors during the harvest. In the more exposed districts this is impossible, and there the grain is conveyed to the village as soon as it is reaped. This scene brought vividly before me the Bible narrative of Boaz and Ruth; and it showed how little change the lapse of nearly 3000 years has effected in the habits of the people of this land.

Before leaving Meirûba I heard that the Metâwely had been lately committing some depredations in the surrounding country, and that the chief sheikh of the district had assembled 300 men to demand restitution and punish the offenders. I was cautioned against travelling alone in these wild regions; but I knew that, so long as I kept within the Christian territory, I was safe, and I also thought the Metâwely would not venture open violence to a Frank. I here learned that the rumours were in part true, and that the road to Afka was not safe. However, it was too late to tell me that now, as my muleteers had in all probability already reached that place.

Half an hour's ride up the steep mountain-side brought us to the natural bridge, called *Jisr el-Hajr*, "The Bridge of Stone." It is about half an hour above the village of Fareiya, towards the summit of Sunnîn. It spans a frightful chasm, like a fissure in the mountain-side. The best view of it is gained by descending to the bottom and passing underneath. The arch then appears regular, and the abutments well formed. It is oblique, and has a span of 150 feet and an elevation of nearly 100. While I was surprised at the colossal proportions of this fine bridge, I felt disappointed in the scenery. It wants features. There are long naked slopes, and lofty rounded summits; but cliff and wood-clad peak are wanting. The mountains are grand, but it is the grandeur of magnitude only.

We turned northward, sweeping along the mountain-side round the head of the glen, and in twenty-five minutes passed the fountain called *Neb'a el-Asil*. This and *Neb'a el-Leben*, the stream from which passes under the natural bridge, are the highest sources of Nahr el-Kelb. From hence the road winds along the brow of a fearful precipice, running almost parallel to the route I had travelled in the morning. In an hour we turned to the right up a glen, and reached *Neb'a el-Kan'a* at 1 o'clock. Here I stopped half an hour for lunch. The nearest road from *Neb'a el-Asil* to *Afka* strikes over a lofty ridge to the right of our path.

On leaving the fountain we ascended a hill by a very difficult path, and on gaining the summit kept straight over the ridge, instead of turning to the right, and thus missed the road. I was well repaid, however, for a détour, by the scene of wild grandeur that opened before me on reaching the northern brow. I stood on the top of a ridge whose side sinks in a series of gigantic natural terraces, faced with cliffs, to the brow of *Wady Ibrahim*; and there a precipice of rock forms the side of a ravine that seems to open the mountain to its base. On the opposite side rises a still loftier precipice, over which towers a mountain peak, its sides partially clothed with the dark foliage of the dwarf oak. Tall needle-like rocks of white limestone shoot up here and there from its sides and summit, giving it an alpine wildness. A fleecy cloud hovered round it, bringing out in bolder relief the jagged top, and rendering still more gloomy, by the contrast, the glen beneath.

A Bedawy, who appeared mysteriously from among the rocks, guided us to the lost road. After passing through the little encampment of his tribe, we reached the spring of *Neb'a el-Hadîd*. Having drunk of its ice-cold waters, we continued our course along the mountain-side—the sublime glen of *Nahr Ibrahim*, far below on our left, and the loftiest summits of Lebanon on our right. The path was a mere goat-track, and the stones loosened by the horses' feet rolled and leaped down the declivity. In an hour we reached the brow of a long descent, passing which we

arrived at Afka at 4.15. The muleteers were waiting beneath the ruins of the old temple. The tent was soon pitched in the ravine below, overshadowed by a large walnut. Beside it the torrent leaped from rock to rock, diffusing an agreeable coolness and freshness through the air, notwithstanding the bright gleams of the evening sun.

This is a spot of singular wildness and beauty. A semi-circular wall of rock, nearly 1000 feet high, shuts in the glen on the E. From a cave at its foot bursts a noble stream, which falls in sheets of foam over ledges of rock, and then rushes through heaps of boulders to unseen depths. Groves of pine and oak intermixed with walnut and mulberry overshadow the waters and clothe the banks. On a little mound beside the waterfall stood the Temple of Venus, now a mass of ruins. Hewn stones and shattered columns cover its summit and sides, while many others have rolled down into the bed of the river.

There can be no doubt that this is the *Apheca*, celebrated in ancient times for its Temple of Venus, where the daughters of Syria assembled to pay their vows to the Goddess of Love. It is also the scene of the romantic tale of 'Venus and Adonis;' and the river was in former days believed to be reddened at certain seasons by the blood of the shepherd hunter who was killed on its banks.

The village of Afka stands a few hundred yards from the fountain, on the side of the ravine. Its inhabitants, all Metâwely, have a bad name, and the appearance and manners of such as I saw tended to corroborate common rumour. They present a marked contrast in their spare figures, restless fierce eyes, and abrupt address, to the staid dignity and noble bearing of their Christian neighbours. They are idle and unsettled in their habits, and noted thieves. While standing on a rock in the stream, searching for inscriptions among the ruins of the temple, a wild shout behind me caused me to start, and, turning, I saw one of the worst specimens of the Metâwely perched on a fragment of rock a few yards distant. His principal articles of dress were a flaming turban, a broad leather belt stuck full of

cartridges, a huge knife, an old pistol, and a gun. I unconsciously looked round to see if any of my attendants were in sight; but there were none, and the spot was lonely enough. A moment's reflection, however, made me smile at fancied danger, and, jumping to his side, I demanded his business. He held out an old Roman copper coin, and asked me to buy it. I did so, and took him to the tent to obtain payment. Here the conversation and inquiries of my friend created some distrust. He said he had a few old gold coins, and wished to know if I would buy them. He also asked whether we would remain there alone at night, and if I had arms with me. The muleteers, on returning from the village, whither they had gone to buy barley and other necessities, were greatly alarmed. The people had tried to bribe them to assist in plundering me; and now they urged me to leave the place, and go to some other village. This proposal I would not listen to, and I laughed at their fears. I thought it right, however, to take every precaution to prevent any attempt at pilfering or carrying off our animals.

August 4th.—At 6.5 we resumed our journey, climbing the side of the ravine, and then skirting a projecting spur of the mountain. Our course was the same as on the preceding day, and the scenery similar in character. At 7.30 we crossed a natural bridge at the foot of a fearful precipice, and a few minutes afterwards passed a ravine. Through this there are traces of an ancient road, beside which my friend Mr. Barnett had discovered a fragment of an inscription containing the name of Diocletian, and tablets with partially defaced cuneiform characters. These I did not then know of. The road probably led from Bâ'albek to the coast. In ten minutes more we entered the village of Akôrah.

After half an hour's delay for breakfast I rode on through a bleak region, close to the base of the central ridge of Lebanon. For five hours my path traversed ridges, valleys, and shelving mountain-sides; and then I found myself on the brow of the magnificent glen of the Kadîsha. It had

been my intention only to go as far as Hadeth ; but I found that village far out of the direct route to the Cedars, and I was, besides, assured that I could reach them from where I stood in three hours. I therefore resolved to change my plan, and proceed direct. I paid a shepherd to remain and tell the muleteers to follow us, and then turned down the declivity to Hasrûn. After a fearful descent of an hour and a quarter we reached this beautiful village. It is situated on the left bank of the Kadîsha, many hundreds of feet above the bed of the river, which runs in a narrow *crevasse* between perpendicular cliffs. Above these the terraced gardens and orchards commence, and run far up the mountain-side. Farther to the eastward the ravine expands, and there stands the village of Bsherreh, about an hour distant.

I was equally struck with the richness of the gardens around Hasrûn, and the beauty and grace of the women and girls that wandered among them. I asked for some apples at one orchard ; there were none, but a little girl came forward with a basket of delicious pears. She was one of the prettiest creatures I had seen in Syria. Her complexion was fair as that of any daughter of England, and her rich auburn hair hung in curls over her neck and shoulders. The boys and men, too, are more like Europeans than Syrians. They have high foreheads, aquiline noses, and bright blue eyes. I no doubt saw them to advantage, as they were in holiday attire. The feast of the Cedars was approaching, and many of the people, with crowds of strangers, were preparing to go to the sacred grove on the following day. I found among them a worthy Italian monk who spoke French. He wished me to join his party, which, he said, would start in a few minutes. I pleaded haste and hurried on, but was afterwards sorry for it, as he reached his destination long before me.

I rode through shady lanes to the straggling village of Bez'ûn, where I stopped half an hour, and then set out for the Cedars. Unfortunately, following the advice of a farrier, we took what he assured us was a better road than the

ordinary one. This led us far away up the mountain-side to the right, and then along the declivity near the summit. The little group of the Cedars was constantly in view, but deep ravines yawned between us. After two hours' wandering we met a man who informed us we were on the straight road to Bâ'albek! He brought us back to the path, but it was 7 o'clock ere we reached our destination. I had been more than twelve hours, in the saddle and felt exhausted. The muleteers had not yet arrived, and I feared they too had wandered. I sat down beneath one of the gigantic trees, expecting to be obliged to pass a dinnerless and houseless night; and this was not the worst, for crowds of drunken men and women were wandering about, quarrelling, and firing off guns and pistols, without much regard to the safety of their neighbours. Thus do they celebrate the feast of the Cedars! About 9 o'clock the muleteers arrived, and after a hearty dinner I threw myself on my bed. I was soon asleep, and, notwithstanding the noisy piety of those around, the light of morn was stealing over the mountain-tops ere I awoke.

August 5th.—On first viewing the Cedars from the heights above Hasrûn I was disappointed. I had pictured in my mind far different scenery. Imagination had painted cliffs, and ravines, and cedars, clinging to the mountain-side, like pines on an alpine peak. But here was a vast recess in the bare white mountains, whose sides slope down smooth and uniform from rounded summits, without crag, or peak, or patch of verdure. The mountain-tops were streaked with snow, but even this almost blended with the white limestone. In the centre of the recess I saw a solitary black speck—it was the cedar grove. On approaching the brow of the hill, where my eye took in the sublime glen of the Kadîsha, with its terraced banks and villages peeping out from masses of foliage, the view was finer and more varied; but still a long naked slope separated the Cedars from the glen.

It was not till I had entered the sacred grove that disappointment vanished. Then the beautiful fan-like branches

of the younger trees, their graceful forms, and, above all, the huge trunks of the patriarchs, which one must walk round ere he can form a true conception of them, excited feelings of unmingled admiration. And when the associations of their antiquity, glory, and sacred interest swelled upon my memory, the wondrous attraction that had for centuries drawn pilgrims to this lonely spot, from the ends of the earth, became manifest. The pine-groves of the Metn are far more picturesque, and the oak forests of Hermon and Bashan far more extensive and beautiful; but cedar beams were laid in the Lord's house at Jerusalem, and cedar forests were the glory of Lebanon, as Lebanon was the glory of Canaan.

Only a few, about a dozen, very ancient trees remain. There are, however, many others of very respectable dimensions, some being 4 or 5 feet in diameter. The grove is compact, the trees with a few exceptions growing close together on the summit and sides of a limestone knoll. In the centre a rude chapel has been constructed within the last few years. In a chamber attached to it resides the deacon, who is the recognised guardian of the place, and expects from all travellers some little present in exchange for a few cones, or a fragment of a branch which the winter's snow may have broken down. I was present during the celebration of morning mass by two stranger bishops who had just arrived. During the performance the deacon brought me the travellers' book, with a pencil from the altar, and requested me to write my name in it. This is certainly a more rational mode of recording a visit than the practice of carving the letters on the bark of some tree. In fact, the trunks of *all* the most ancient trees, with one exception, are now hacked and hewn by this barbarous propensity of travellers.

I bade adieu to the Cedars; and as I toiled up the steep ascent I met crowds of men and women flocking to the feast. An hour and a half brought me to the summit of the mountain. The panorama here spread around me was of vast extent and great beauty. From a height of 9000

feet I looked down on peak, and glen, and terraced slope along the western side of the mountain-chain, until my eye rested on the vast expanse of the Mediterranean. Toward the S.W. the main ridge ran in a straight course to Sunnîn. On the N.E. rose at my side the loftiest summits in Syria. Turning eastward, at my feet was the Bukâ'a, smooth as a lake, dotted with villages, and beyond it the long chain of Antilebanon, culminating far away on the S. in the graceful cone of Hermon.

A descent of an hour and a half brought me to 'Ain 'Ata, a fountain of ice-cold water. The main ridge of Lebanon was now crossed, but a side ridge covered with forests of oak and wild pear-trees was still before me. Pressing onward, over slope and through vale, I reached, in two hours more, the small and wretched village of Deir el-Ahmer, on the side of the Bukâ'a. I felt inclined to rest for a time beneath the shade of a ruined church, but the heat, the dust, and the insolence of the people, were too much for endurance. I therefore mounted, and turned toward Bâ'albek, and in two hours I once more took my seat beneath the shade of its majestic ruins.

The eastern slopes of Lebanon have never hitherto been accurately described. The central chain, as has been stated, lies between the Cedars and 'Ain 'Ata, and extends in an unbroken line N.E. and S.W. It is lofty, steep, and grand, but naked and barren. The surface is covered with gravel, the débris of the limestone rock of which the range is composed. Here and there a solitary oak or pine appears, but there is no other verdure. The waters of 'Ain 'Ata burst out at the base of this ridge; and beside the fountain a long, deep, straight valley runs parallel to the chain, extending S.W. as far as Sunnîn, and N.E. to the "entering in of Hamath." Between this valley and the plain of the Bukâ'a is a *side ridge*, almost as broad in places as the central chain, but much lower; its features are entirely different. Its sides have an easy slope, and are covered with forests. It is lowest and narrowest about halfway between 'Ain 'Ata and Sunnîn; and the Bukâ'a at this point attains its greatest

breadth. Northward it increases in altitude and width, encroaching on the plain, but not altering the course of the central chain. Opposite Fikeh, a small village at the base of Antilebanon, 18 miles from Bâ'albek, it attains its greatest height, and here the Bukâ'a is narrowest.

I shall not detain my reader among the ruins of Bâ'albek, though they are familiar to me as the home of my youth. They have already been visited and described by historians, antiquaries, architects, poets, and painters; and I care not for retracing the sketches of others. My province is among less known, if less interesting, sites and ruins.

August 6th.—I left the fountain on whose grassy bank I had encamped, at 5.20. The path I took to Bludân is different from the usual route; it was new to me, while the other I had traversed before. I wished, too, if possible, to trace the line of the Roman road from Bâ'albek to Zebdâny, and in this I was successful. My way led near the base of Antilebanon, and after proceeding about three-quarters of an hour I came upon the ancient road. In twenty minutes more I passed a ruined village, with foundations of large hewn stones, evidently Roman. Another quarter of an hour brought me to a deep ravine, which runs down on the right to the village of Taiyibeh. I could not see the place where the Roman road crossed this ravine, but soon after passing it I again observed faint traces of it. I had travelled so far in a direction nearly S.W., but here I turned S. by E. up a gentle slope. In half an hour I reached a sublime glen which intersects a side ridge of Antilebanon. Through this I passed in the line of the ancient road. The scenery is wild, cliffs towering overhead, surmounted by wooded peaks. The village of Sh'afbeh stands on the declivity half a mile to the left, and behind it rise the rugged sides of the central chain. After ascending the bank of the ravine, and crossing a low ridge, I came to the head of a long winding valley called Wady M'arabûn. On my left was a knoll crowned by the ruins of a temple, and at its eastern base a small fountain. I rode down this valley, crossing and recrossing

the bed of a stream. The hills on the right slope gently up, but those on the left have bold features and are deeply furrowed by ravines. After riding about two hours down the valley, I reached a place where it expands into a little plain of meadows and corn-fields. On a rocky tell on its eastern side stands the half-ruined village of M'arabûn. The mountain on the left rises 3000 feet almost a sheer precipice, and on its jagged summits are forests of juniper. The grandeur of the scenery among these peaks is scarcely exceeded by any in Lebanon.

The ancient road appears to have skirted the northern side of this plain. At the base of the tell on which M'arabûn stands is a large fountain, the principal source of Nahr Yahfûfeh. A quarter of an hour after passing it I dismounted for breakfast, beneath a giant walnut, close to the foundations of a very ancient temple. This building was small, with a portico of heavy columns to the E. Its architecture appears to have been simple and chaste.

After an hour's rest I again mounted, and rode through rich fields along the left bank of the wady. I passed close on my right a Roman bridge of a single arch spanning the stream. By this the road appears to have crossed from the opposite side of the vale. A few yards below this spot the river enters the wild ravine of Yahfûfeh, through which it winds to the Bukâ'a, five miles distant.

I now turned to the left up a picturesque branch valley containing a tributary of the Yahfûfeh. Its banks are lined with corn-fields and fringed with poplars and walnuts. In twenty-eight minutes I reached the large village of Surghâya, which gives its name to the river, the wady, and a plain on the S.W. There is a large fountain, the source of the stream, in the gardens beside the houses. I here entered a plain about a mile in breadth, having on the right a low ridge, and on the left the loftiest peaks of Antilebanon. Along the base of the latter are extensive vineyards. About the centre of the plain is the watershed between the valleys of Yahfûfeh and the Barada, and, consequently, between

the Bukâ'a and the eastern desert. In forty-five minutes from Surghâya I had on my left, at the foot of the precipitous mountain-side, the hamlet of 'Ain Hauwar, with a large fountain, the source of Nahr Zebdâny. In ten minutes more I reached the end of the plain of Surghâya and the head of Wady Zebdâny, and another hour brought me to Bludân.



Monument of Hümmül.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOUR TO HÜMS, AND ROUND THE NORTHERN END OF ANTILEBANON.

Ride over Antilebanon from Saidnāya to Bâ'albek — Temple of Nahleh — Topography of Antilebanon — The ruins of Lybon and source of the Orontes — Ancient canals — Convent and ruins at Ras Bâ'albek — Great fountain of the Orontes — Excavated convent of Mâr Marûn — Monument of Hümmül — Ruins of Jâsy — Not the site of Laodicia — Depredations of the Bedawîn — Site and history of RIBLAH — The Orontes — Probable site of Laodicia ad Libanum — The lake of Hüms — Hüms, the ancient Emesa — Effects of Turkish misrule — Assyrian mounds — History and antiquities of Emesa — Northern termination of Antilebanon — Tragic death of the Aga of Hasya.

NORTHERN BORDER OF THE "LAND OF ISRAEL" — Mount Hor — The "Entering in of Hamath" — Identification of ZEDAD and HAZAR-ENAN.

Night march and adventure with Bedawîn — Site of Comochara — Nebk — Ride by M'alâla to Damascus.

ON the 11th of October, 1853, I set out, in company with the Rev. Mr. Barnett, on a tour to Hûms. We proposed to include in our excursion as many villages as possible, and in order to accomplish this determined to proceed northward from Bâ'albek through Cœlesyria, and to return along the eastern side of Antilebanon. I made every preparation for examining the antiquities and topography of the country, as far as time and opportunity might permit.

At 12 o'clock we left Bâb Tûma, and crossing the plain to Burzeh proceeded to Saidnâya by a road a little to the right of that described formerly.¹ I thus gained a good bird's-eye view of the eastern section of the plain of Sahra to the base of Jebel Tinîyeh, and afterwards passed through the village of Ma'arra. We spent the night in the convent, as we travelled without tents or equipage.

October 12th.—After attending the morning service in the church we walked round the ruins of this interesting village, but the results of our researches have already been given. We engaged a guide to conduct us over the mountain-chain to Bâ'albek. This we found a work of some difficulty, as the intervening country, and indeed the whole northern section of Antilebanon, is the stronghold of the "House of Harfûsh," the hereditary Emîrs of Bâ'albek, who, since the rebellion of the Metâwely in 1850, have been outlawed by the Turkish Government. For a number of years it has been the policy of the local authorities to exterminate this princely family. Several of them have been captured and are now exiles in Crete; some have been killed in battle, and a few have been privately murdered, whether by the instigation of Government or not it is difficult to *prove*. The Emîr Sulimân, the present head of the house, defies the Government, maintains a guard of 100 horse, which he can increase fourfold on an emergency, and, though an outlaw, is the virtual governor of the district. Not a few of his followers live by plunder; the flocks, and even the grain and houses, of the surrounding villages suffer from their

¹ See above, ch. v. section i., where a description of Saidnâya, and the route between it and Damascus, may be found.

depredations. Fortunately for us, the Emir, though outlawed by the sultan, is a kind of English protégé, as indeed are most rebels in this and other lands at the present time. *We* had therefore nothing to fear, and succeeded in persuading the Christian guide that we could protect him if he would point out the way.

We left the convent at 8 o'clock, and took a path leading up the rocky side of Jebel Shurabīn. At 8.20 we saw the village of Telfita two miles on our left. The declivities are here cultivated in little patches among the rocks. The ruins of chapels and oratories crown the lower peaks, and stud the sides of Shurabīn, while on its summit stands the ancient convent from which it takes its name. At 8.50 we reached a commanding brow. From this spot I was able, by connecting points from which bearings had been formerly taken, to cover with a network of triangles the south-eastern section of Antilebanon from Hermon to Yabrūd, as well as the plain along its base. This district, with its peaks and ridges, valleys and plains, was spread before me like a map. The minaret at the East Gate of Damascus was clearly seen.

Starting again, we reached the summit of the ridge in nine minutes, and began to descend by an easy slope. In twenty minutes we were on the side of the great plateau, the upper terrace of the eastern slopes of Antilebanon. Seven minutes afterwards we struck the road from Menīn and Telfita at the fountain of Sureir. This is the most direct route from Damascus to Bā'albek. Its course is from the city to Burzeh, thence through the pass of M'araba to Menīn, then direct over arid declivities to Telfita and Jubb Sureir, where we now stood. Around this place there is some cultivation. The soil is light and gravelly; but, being abundantly watered by the rains and snows of winter, it is not unproductive. We rode across the plateau due N. The central chain rose in front like a vast wall.

We reached the north-western side of the plain at 10.53, having been 1 h. 27 m. in crossing it. At this place it is stony and barren, and prickly shrubs grow among the rocks. Along the base of the central ridge is a belt of dwarf oak

and wild plum. As we rode across the plateau we observed large numbers of beautiful wild flowers. In the spring the mountains, plains, and valleys of this land are carpeted with flowers; but never in any other place had I seen so many in the autumn. It proves that this plateau is less affected than the lower plains by the summer's sun.

At 11.15 we again mounted and rode up a little valley called Haurât, and then traversed a succession of low wooded ridges and little upland plains. The scenery became wild and grand. Naked cliffs crowned the rugged range on the left, and the declivities on both sides were covered with thin forests of oak mingled with the wild plum and hawthorn. No living thing was within view as we wound among rocks and through defiles, save a few eagles soaring overhead. We had just remarked how well such a region suits the bandit and the outlaw when a shrill cry from the mountain's side rang in our ears; it was answered by another from the opposite peak, but still no human being was in sight. After crossing a rising ground, a horseman with a single attendant on foot was seen approaching from the tangled wood, and the voices of numerous others were heard in the distance. We pressed on, however, gave the ordinary salutations to the strangers, and continued our journey in peace. Our Frank costume was a guarantee that we were neither spies nor Government agents. At 11.55 we commenced the ascent of a rocky ridge, apparently the back-bone of Antilebanon; but we observed that the valleys still ran eastward, showing that the watershed was in front. After crossing a wild ravine, and traversing a verdant plain, we reached the fountain of Dura at 12.40.

This fountain, with its plain, is in the very heart of the central chain, the loftiest peaks of which rise in stern grandeur around it. We dismounted and sat on the grassy banks of the stream to eat our lunch, for which an early breakfast and a ride of more than four hours had given us an appetite. Vast flocks of birds hovered round us; we had disturbed them in their favourite haunt, and they now waited impatiently till we should again leave them in quiet

possession. A few hawks, gliding close to the surface of the ground, or poised motionless high in air, showed that we were not the only disturbers of this feathered throng. One or two solitary vultures perched, gloomy and sorrowful-like, on a neighbouring cliff, and over them eagles swept in graceful circles. This place, in fact, seemed the choice retreat of the feathered tribes. As we rode up, a jackal sneaked away among the rocks. Over the whole plain were traces of the recent burrowing of the wild boar; and at our feet was the broad track of a bear that had lately come to drink. Antilebanon is thinly peopled by man; but the lower animals, birds and beasts, inhabit it in vast numbers. The multitude of eagles is almost incredible; they may be seen every day in flocks circling round some cliff, or soaring aloft over their prey. On one occasion, being wearied with a ramble, and falling asleep amid the loftiest summits of the mountains, I was roused by a strange sound, as if of a whirlwind sweeping through the old juniper trees, and, on looking up, I saw twenty-four eagles dashing through the air, most of them approaching in their circling course within pistol-shot. Vultures are also numerous, and hawks are found in endless variety. A species of daw, resembling the jackdaw of England, frequents the higher districts. Partridges abound everywhere, and snipes and woodcocks wherever there is water. Of beasts, the bear is the largest: he is low, but long and powerfully made, and of a dull brown colour. The wolf, hyæna, jackal, wild boar, and hare, are numerous. Panthers are found on Hermon, but I have never seen any of them.

At 1.15 we left the fountain, and rode up the mountain over basalt. In ten minutes we reached the summit, and the watershed between the Buká'a and the eastern plain. Here, as I stood looking along the ridge to the N.E., I had on my left the abrupt and rugged descent to Wady M'arabûn, which, with its continuation, Wady Yahfûfeh, lay at my feet. Beyond them extended the plain of Coelesyria, shut in by the lofty wall of Lebanon. On the right I looked over jagged cliffs and mountain-peaks to the plateau of

'Asal. I could distinguish the entrance of Wady Haurât, through which we had passed on entering the mountains. The whole scenery is grand and rugged. The declivities on the W. are deeply furrowed by ravines, while the ridges and peaks on the E., with the glens that divide them, are clothed with oak, pine, and juniper. The elevation of the pass I estimated at about 6000 feet. It is lower than the average height of this part of the chain.

We turned down a narrow path that descends the western declivities by an easy gradient. In ten minutes we reached a meadow containing several small fountains, the water from which runs down a glen to Wady M'arabûn. This is the highest source of the Yahfûfeh. Fifteen minutes after, we passed another fountain called '*Ain Hil-Serâbek*, "The Fountain of the Opening of the Knapsack." It appears from the name to be a favourite resort of shepherds, who are great epicures in water. They here collect their flocks during the heat of day, and, opening the *scrips* in which each carries his humble fare, eat their meals with a relish which those only can realise who breathe mountain air and are braced by vigorous exercise. Often in my wanderings have I sat beside a fountain in the midst of these wild-looking shepherds. I have seen their flocks gathered round them in one dense mass; and I have been astonished and pleased to observe that this mingling creates no confusion. Each shepherd, when he has finished his repast, or when the time of rest is over, rises from his place and walks away, calling his sheep or goats, and immediately his own flock leaves the throng and follows him. "His sheep follow him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers."

As we continued our route the scenery increased in grandeur; the mountain-side towering up on our right almost a sheer precipice, and the ravines opening on our left like yawning gulfs. At 2.38 we turned to the left, and after half an hour's descent by a difficult zigzag path reached the fountain of Benaiyeh, near the ruined temple in the head of

Wady M'arabûn. A few minutes afterwards we struck the road described in last journey, and proceeded along it to Bâ'albek, where we arrived as the sun was setting behind Lebanon.

October 13th.—We left Bâ'albek at 7.40, passing over heaps of ruins, near one of the ancient gates. Our course was over a stony plain, along which I observed traces of a Roman road. After winding for a time among bleak hills, and crossing a ridge, we reached the brow of a ravine, and, descending a little, dismounted beside the village of Nahleh. This village is situated on a cliff on the southern bank of the ravine. It contains the foundations and portions of the walls of a massive temple, simple and chaste in style, like that on the hill at Mejdél 'Anjar.

The chain of Antilebanon opposite Nahleh is composed of three ridges; *that on the west* is lowest, and is separated from the others by Wady Sibât, which seems from a distance to be a continuation of Wady M'arabûn. The *central ridge* here appears for the first time rising over the former, gradually increasing in altitude as it runs N.E., until it overtops the others. The *eastern ridge* is the loftiest of all toward the south; but it decreases in height from this point onward.

At 9.5 we again mounted, and, ascending the northern bank of the ravine, continued in our former course. In a quarter of an hour we turned northward, and in another quarter observed on the right, high up on the southern brow of the ridge, the walls of some ancient structure. We reached Yunin at 9.52. It is situated on the northern bank of a ravine, down which flows a fine stream. A canal is conducted from it to the northward. Along this our path lay for three-quarters of an hour, when, on surmounting a rising ground, I saw for the first time the monument of Hürmül on the distant horizon. This was an important point for connecting the plain of Hūms with the central and southern sections of the Bukâ'a; I consequently took a series of bearings. At 12 o'clock we turned toward the village of 'Ain, now seen crowning one of the spurs of

Antilebanon, and after a dreary ride of fifty-five minutes reached *Lebweh*.

Lebweh consists of a few huts situated on the side of a tell, in the middle of a fine vale, which extends across the Bukâ'a. A large fountain gushes from the limestone rock at the foot of Antilebanon, and a stream from it flows down the vale. Its banks are covered with luxuriant vegetation, and there are meadows and corn-fields where the valley expands near the base of Lebanon. Three ancient canals lead the water off from the stream at different elevations for the irrigation of the sides of the valley and the plain. One of them is of great size, and is more than 15 miles in length. The fountain at Lebweh is the highest source of the Orontes.

Lebweh is evidently an ancient site. The tell on which the houses stand is covered with heaps of rubbish, intermixed with fragments of columns and hewn stones. On its northern side are the massive foundations of a temple. All is ruin and desolation. The name suggests identity with *Lybon*, mentioned in the Itinerary of Antonine, on the road between Emesa and Heliopolis.

After a brief stop to examine the ruins we mounted and rode up the gentle slope to 'Ain, which we reached in three-quarters of an hour. A few ancient tombs hewn in the rock on the S. side of the village are the only remains of antiquity visible. Passing through it, we continued in the same course, and in twenty-seven minutes reached the summit of a ridge—a spur from the main chain of Antilebanon, whose naked sides now rose close on our right. From this elevated spot we had an extensive view over the great plain. In front was a picturesque glen; its sides in places walls of white rock, while below lay gardens and orchards on the banks of a stream. On the right bank stands the village of Fikeh. We descended by a zigzag path to the gardens, and, after winding for a time through narrow lanes shaded by foliage, we struck up the opposite bank among the scattered houses of the village. We crossed another bleak ridge, and in half an hour reached Ras Bâ'albek. Passing over heaps of

ruins, in the midst of which stands an old church with a stone roof, we rode on to the convent, where we were kindly received by the village priest.

Ras Bâ'albek contains about forty poor houses, constructed chiefly of the materials of ancient buildings. There are, on the S. side of the houses, large heaps of rubbish mixed with broken columns and massive hewn stones; and in the foundations of the convent, which stands a few hundred yards up the valley, are stones of great size. There are no inscriptions, nor is there even a local tradition to indicate the ancient name.

October 14th.—Accompanied by an intelligent guide, I ascended the lofty tell on the N. side of the convent, to obtain a view of the northern base of Antilebanon, the vale of the Orontes, and the plain of Hŭms. I was amply repaid for my morning's toil in the magnificent prospect I enjoyed. Standing amid the ruins of an old convent, I rested my compass on a stone, and commenced a survey of the plain I purposed on this and the following day to traverse. On my right ran the base of the mountains in an indented line, until the chain sank into the plain. In this line, about 10 miles distant, I saw the towers, and ruins of Jûsy; about an hour to the N. lay the village of Zerra'a, with its luxuriant gardens. Far away on the distant horizon the rays of the rising sun lighted up the castle-hill of Hŭms. Its lake, like a sheet of burnished gold, lay to the W. of the town; and beyond it appeared the pale blue summits of *Kurân Hamâh*. The village of Kâ'a is situated in the plain half an hour distant, and the waters of the canal from Lebweh covers its fields with verdure. The strange monument of Hŭrmûl stands all solitary in the midst of the desert. The course of the Orontes was not visible, save where, here and there, a break in the tall reeds and rank herbage that conceal its waters revealed a bright spot.

As it was our intention this day to visit the fountain of the Orontes, and to proceed thence by way of Hŭrmûl and Jûsy to Riblah, we selected an active guide to conduct us by the most direct routes. We mounted at 8.5, and rode down

the valley, over heaps of ruins, to the fountain. Here we entered luxuriant gardens and orchards, and in a few minutes emerged on the open plain. In half an hour we crossed the great canal. Beyond it the plain becomes barren and stony. Our course was direct toward the fountain of the Orontes, the position of which our guide indicated by a white path running down to it from the declivities of Lebanon. At 9.45 we reached a small ruined village called Khirbet el-Hyât; and, descending, we came, in ten minutes more, to the side of a pool on the right bank of the River Lebweh. Here we left our horses, scrambled over a ledge of smooth rock, and reached the brow of a low cliff, looking over which we saw the fountain bursting from beneath the rock into the bed of the stream. It is far inferior in grandeur to Fijeh, and the united waters did not appear to me of greater volume than those of the Barada. It is difficult, however, to judge of the volume of a river near such a fountain. The water issues from the rocks with such force, and rushes in its bed with such swiftness, that the volume is much larger than it appears. The banks of the stream are lofty and precipitous, and its course very tortuous. It runs northward for about a mile, and then, turning E. by N., flows in a winding channel towards Riblah. Having examined the fountain, we re-ascended the right bank, and proceeded along it a few hundred yards to the excavated convent of *Mâr Marân*. It is hewn out of the rock, in the side of the upper cliff, and its apartments are said to be numerous and spacious. It was now, however, filled with sheep and goats, and several savage dogs kept guard over them, so that we did not venture to enter. The side-range of Lebanon rises abruptly from the chasm through which the river winds. Its sides are deeply furrowed by glens, and sparsely covered with coppice and oak-trees.

At 10.20 we remounted, and proceeded in a straight course across the plain to the monument of Hürmül, which we reached at 11.5. As I approached it I felt much disappointed in its apparent dimensions. It did not seem more than 30 feet high, and, when I observed two foxes

taking refuge behind some loose stones near the summit, I fancied I could soon dislodge them. But when I reached its base, and drew up my horse beneath its shadow, all disappointment vanished. I made a hasty sketch of the monument and its bas-reliefs, and then took a series of bearings of the principal places in sight.

While thus occupied, Mr. Barnett was engaged in making *jac-similes* of the marks and cuttings on the lower part of the monument. These are singular, but all manifestly of a comparatively recent date, and never intended to represent words. Wandering shepherds and idle Bedawin have for ages been busy carving these strange signs. The Arabs are a singular people in this respect. If one of them sees a heap of stones, he will put one on the top of it; or if he sees a number of rags tied to an old tree, he will not pass till one has been separated from his own stock and hung up among its brethren, and I suppose it is the same propensity that leads them to add to these marks.

That there was at one time an inscription on this monument I have little doubt. It is not probable that such a building would be erected without some record of its object and its founder. A minute examination of the fallen stones on the western side might repay the trouble and expense, by bringing to light some incident or epoch in the history of this land. The bas-reliefs on the three sides, which remain entire, are better executed than I had expected to find them. True, they have not the freedom or boldness of Grecian and Roman sculpture, yet they are far superior to many of those discovered by Layard amid the ruins of Nineveh. On one side is an elephant standing in the centre, with a bear in front, and a bull behind. On another side are two stags, one standing and the other lying. On the third side is a wild boar attacked by two dogs; two spears are sticking in his sides. Spears, arrows, and other weapons of the chase are grouped round the figures. The monument stands on a pedestal of three retreating layers of basalt, each 2 feet high. It is divided into three stories. The first is a cube of solid masonry, $29\frac{1}{2}$ feet on each side, and about 26 feet high,

with pilasters at the corners, supporting a plain cornice. The second story is somewhat smaller, and has two pilasters on each side, besides those at the angles. The third is a pyramid. The total height of the monument is about 80 feet.

At 12.20 we mounted and turned our horses' heads toward Jûsy, whose towers we could distinguish at the base of Antilebanon. We had been warned both at Bâ'albek and Râs to be on our guard against the 'Omûr, a warlike tribe of Bedawîn, that had lately pitched their tents among the mountains S. of Kâ'a and Jûsy; but as we saw the plain clear before us, and as we were well mounted and armed, we resolved at all hazards to visit the ruins of this city. Under ordinary circumstances, even when this plain is filled with Bedawîn, there is little danger in travelling among them; but of late the regular troops have been removed to the seat of war, and the authority of the Government is insufficient to prevent robberies or punish the guilty. The tribes of the desert always know how to take advantage of such times, and all travellers must be prepared to defend themselves, as otherwise there is no security.

Nothing could be more dreary and desolate than this plain. Fragments of basalt, limestone, and flint, almost cover its surface. The few stunted shrubs that spring up among them appear as if charred, and there is no other sign of vegetable life at this season. The scorching rays of the summer's sun burn up every herb and shrub. At 1.10 the village of Kâ'a was about two miles on our right. A short distance from it is a building like a fortress; it is probably a fortified khan. In twenty-five minutes more we crossed a branch of the canal from Lebweh; there was now no water in it, but there were evidences that it had only been turned off a few hours previously. Some minutes afterward we entered a tract of deep soil, well cultivated and abundantly watered. The change was as sudden as it was remarkable. This fertile tract continued for three-quarters of an hour; the road from Kâ'a to Ribleh runs through it. The stony plain then again commences; we rode across it until, at 3 o'clock, we reached Jûsy.

A shallow wady descends from the mountains, and in it stands Jûsy, about a quarter of an hour from their base. Seldom have I seen a place, even in this land of desolation, so completely desolate as this ; and never have I seen ruins of such extent so totally devoid of interest. Their desolation is, no doubt, in a great measure owing to the want of water. Water was originally supplied by subterranean reservoirs, which exist in great numbers. These were filled by the winter rains, or probably by streams from the mountains. The ruins are about two miles and a half in circumference, but there are no traces among them of architectural beauty. The principal building is a square castle, 132 yards on each side, with towers at the angles. One of its gates is standing ; it is low, with a square top, and has a deep moulding. The walls are constructed of hewn stones, and the masonry appears to be of the later Roman period. Four square towers, of much inferior workmanship and later date, are the only other buildings that now exist. Over the door of one of these is a cross. Large heaps of rubbish and hewn stones are scattered over the site. The foundations of houses, and even the lines of rectangular streets, can be traced ; but it appears as if a large number of the stones had been removed for the construction of some other buildings, probably those of *modern Jûsy*, which is only half an hour distant.

Abulfeda mentions both a town and district called Jûsieh ; but I think it is *modern Jûsy* he refers to. There are no evidences that this place was inhabited by Muslims, or since their conquest of Syria. There is not a vestige of Saracenic architecture. There is not a mosque, minaret, or prayer-niche ; and there can be little doubt that, had any ever existed, they would have been spared. Modern Jûsy is only a mile and a half distant, and it contains important buildings, which appeared to me to be of Saracenic origin. Here is a large mosque with a fine minaret, though the place is deserted.

It has been conjectured that this is the *Laodicia Scabiosa* of Ptolemy, or the *Laodicia ad Libanum* of the ancient coins and medals, referred to by Strabo as standing near the

northern end of Antilebanon. There is also a *Laudicia*, mentioned in the Itinerary of Antonine, on the road between Emesa and Heliopolis, which is doubtless the same. The distances there given, however, do not at all agree with the position of the present ruins.

According to the ancient Itineraries, *Laodicia* lay 18 Roman miles from Emesa, and 64 from Heliopolis, but *Jûsy* is 25 miles distant from the former place, and only about 40 from the latter. If therefore the Itineraries are correct, *Jûsy* cannot be identified with the ancient *Laodicia*.

We left the ruins at 3.30, and had modern *Jûsy* a short distance on our right at 4 o'clock. I regret that we did not turn aside to visit it, as it is probable among the stones which have been brought from the other town some Greek inscriptions may still exist. The soil around the village is fertile, and a canal from the 'Asy at one time brought water for irrigation. *Ibrahîm* Pasha rebuilt the village, and planted in it a colony of peasants; but when his Government was overthrown by Western intervention, and the desert hordes were no longer held in check by his strong hand, *Jûsy*, like many other places, was soon laid waste. Last year a wealthy Christian of *Hûms* farmed the village, and brought to it a colony from *Sûdûd*, the chief seat of the Jacobites, but the *Bedawîn* came and quarrelled with the new occupiers; one of the former was killed, and the villagers, to escape blood-revenge, were forced to desert their newly-erected homes. . . . Continuing our course over a fine plain, we reached *Riblah* at 4.35.

Riblah is one of the most ancient sites in this land; but it is now a wretched village of some forty houses, situated on the right bank of the *Orontes*. The banks of the river are low, and a plain of great fertility stretches away on every side. The only remains of antiquity are the foundations of a square tower, constructed of large hewn stones. The sheikh informed us, however, that in the gardens and fields traces of ancient buildings of considerable extent are found beneath the soil.

In defining the northern border of the land promised to the Israelites, RIBLAH is mentioned in connexion with other cities, among which are Hamath and Zedad: "And the coast shall go down from Shepham to *Riblah, on the east side of Ain*."¹ There cannot be a doubt that this is the site of Riblah. It is described as being upon the "east side of Ain;" but *Ain* is the Hebrew word for a fountain, and it may therefore be read "Riblah on the east side of the fountain;" and so it is translated in the Septuagint. Riblah is nine miles E. of the great fountain of the Orontes; which I am therefore inclined to think is the Ain referred to. In the year B.C. 611, Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt, conquered the armies of Judah; and king Josiah fell in battle on the plain of Megiddo. Pharaoh marched northward and invaded Mesopotamia; and the city of Riblah, which is described as being in the land of Hamath, remained for some time in his hands. Three years later the Egyptian monarch was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, and driven out of Asia. The conqueror seized northern Syria and marched on Jerusalem. Riblah remained in his possession for many years. In B.C. 588 his head-quarters were established here while he prosecuted the war against the Jews; and when Jerusalem fell, and Zedekiah with his sons was taken captive, they were conducted to this city, where a dreadful fate was in store for them: "And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon."

The glory of Riblah has long since passed away. One can see, however, that a more suitable situation for the head-quarters of a great army could not be selected: a rich plain, salubrious air, abundant waters, ready access by easy and open roads to every district of the country, whether maritime or inland, unite in rendering Riblah a strategic position of the first importance. The military monarch of Babylon was evidently well acquainted with Syria, and perfectly capable of taking advantage of its resources.

¹ Num. xxxiv. 11.

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October 15th.—We started from Riblah at 6.7, glad to effect our escape from myriads of fleas. Never before, during all my travels, had I suffered such torture from these insects. Our course lay along the winding banks of the Orontes. The black tents of the Bedawin lined the river. Thousands of sheep and goats, filling the air with their bleatings, were going forth to pasture, each flock led by its own shepherd. They followed him, for they knew his voice. Vast herds of camels had already wandered off, and as the old ones were solemnly browsing, the young were striving to convert their ungainly motions into play. Peasants were in the fields, turning up the soil with primitive ploughs, and urging on their teams with patriarchal goads. It was such a scene as one might have witnessed on the same spot 3000 years ago. It was with such pictures the prophets were familiar, and from them they drew those beautiful figures we read and admire in their writings. The language of the Psalmist seemed now doubly expressive: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; *he leadeth me beside the still waters.*"

At 6.30 we crossed the first tributary to the 'Asy, by a deep and difficult ford. It comes from the village of Zerra'a, three quarters of an hour on our right. The 'Asy here turns N., toward Tell Neby Mindow, and our road lay along its right bank. Hundreds of wildfowl float upon its surface, or stalk along the water's edge. The nimble duck and melancholy heron are seen at almost every step, while storks wander over the neighbouring fields. At 7 o'clock the village of Kuseir lay half an hour on our right, in the midst of a naked but fertile plain; and fifteen minutes afterwards I noticed a little island in the river, with a mill. A bridge here spans the right channel. At 8.13 we were opposite Tell Neby Mindow, situated on the left bank about half a mile from our road. A small village and a white-domed wely stand upon its summit, and the sides and ground around its base are strewn with ruins. It is evidently an ancient site, and a city of importance must have occupied it. Its position answers well to the *Laudicia* of the Itinerary

of Antonine, as it is just *eighteen* Roman miles from Emesa ; and when allowance is made for curves in the road, its distance from Lebweh is about *thirty miles*.

After a short delay we set out ; and in five minutes had on our left the village of Arjûn ; in twenty minutes more I saw on the opposite side of the river a village, encompassed by ancient ruins. Its name, as given me by an Arab woman, was Um el-Adâm. Ten minutes on our right was a singular rectangular mound, hollow in the centre, and encompassed by a dyke of earth of uniform height along the sides, but elevated at the corners. As seen from the road it appears to be square, and each side from 200 to 300 yards in length. It is probably an entrenched camp. Ten minutes afterwards we passed Kefr Mûsa, on the left bank of the river, and the ruins of a small village opposite it ; and in ten minutes more we halted on the summit of a high artificial mound, from which I obtained a good view of the southern end of the lake where the 'Asy falls into it. The castle-hill of Hûms was in view, and a tell at the north-eastern extremity of the lake. Towards the W., the opening between the chain of Lebanon and the Nusairtyeh mountains was clearly distinguishable. From its character it must have been not only a conspicuous landmark, but an important pass in every age. It is the natural entrance from the coast to the whole of this plain ; and the road from Riblah, Hûms, and Hamah to Tripoli, and the maritime plain, passes through it.

Descending from the tell, we galloped after our servants along the plain. We soon overtook them, and entered the village of Kefr 'Ady together at 9.20. The margin of the lake is here about ten minutes distant ; and a little island with an artificial mound lies half a mile from the shore. At 9.55 we had Shaumertyeh on our left. The margin of the lake soon afterwards approaches close to the road ; but being greatly indented, the distance varies every few yards. At 10.25 we reached Kuseib, a small village situated on a mound whose base is washed by the waves. After a pause of ten minutes we turned aside from the direct route to visit

the great dam at the eastern end of the lake, and to ascend an artificial mound near it. Sweeping round the shore, we reached the summit of the tell in fifteen minutes, and from it had a commanding view of the lake and surrounding plain. On the S. and E. the plain is perfectly flat, and has a fertile soil; but it is only in part cultivated. On the N. the ground rises, and the surface seems to be covered with loose stones of basalt.

We rode a few hundred yards along the shore to the end of the dam, where we dismounted, and walked along its top to near the tower on the opposite side. It is a work of high antiquity, and was intended to raise the water to a sufficient height to irrigate the plain around Hüms. Some of the old canals are still in repair, and carry water to the gardens and fields; but the greater number are neglected. The embankment is about a quarter of a mile in length; but in no place more than 14 feet in height. It has been built and rebuilt. Specimens of the workmanship of every nation that has ruled over these plains may here be seen, from the successors of the great Alexander, and the procurators of imperial Rome, down to the pashas and petty governors of Turkey. From this place the river flows through a shallow wady, sweeping round northwards at the distance of about half a mile from the Emesa.

At 11.30 we again mounted and struck across the plain, through fine fields, to the main road, which we reached in a quarter of an hour. The road is wide and good, and the plain can scarcely be surpassed in fertility. The banks of the river on our left were lined with gardens and orchards; while the white castle-hill rose directly in front. At 12 o'clock we saw Nukeireh, about twenty minutes on our right, and beside it an artificial mound. Half an hour farther Kefr 'Aya stood on the same side. In a few minutes more we passed close to a lofty tell on the left of the road; and some distance E. of it is the small village of Wely Bab 'Omar. At 1.15 we entered the gate of Hüms.

The town of *Hüms* is situated in the midst of a vast plain. One of my first spare hours during my stay was employed in

ascending the castle-hill and examining minutely the whole region, taking careful bearings of every village and prominent object in view. I was accompanied by a Greek priest called Esa, reputed one of the most learned men in Hūms, and Sulimān 'Awad, a member of the Jacobite Church, intimately acquainted with the surrounding country, and noted for his intelligence and veracity. On the N. the plain extends unbroken to a group of four hills, the two centre ones of which are called the Horns of Hamâh. On the road to it, about two and a half hours distant, is a tell with ruins, and a village called Bîseh. A little eastward are seen the blue summits of a mountain-range, where, according to Sulimān, are many villages whose houses are built of stone. This is the district of Salemiyah, mentioned by Abulfeda. Eastward the plain meets the horizon. About due E. commences another range, and extends southward till it joins the eastern branches of Antilebanon. The caravan-road to Damascus runs over the plain in nearly a straight line to Hasya.

Such was the wide panorama spread around me as I stood amid the ruins of the old castle. An unbroken plain, extending for many hours on every side, without a hill, without even a solitary tree, save those in the gardens of the city. Villages only occur at long intervals, and there is no other sign of life or habitation. Turkish rapacity and misrule have contributed to lay waste one of the fairest portions of Syria, and the few inhabitants that still cling to the soil can only drag out a life of toil and poverty by paying "black mail" to Arab chiefs and exorbitant taxes to Turkish pashas.

Almost the only objects of interest in an antiquarian point of view in this region are the artificial mounds that meet the eye in every part of the plain, but which occur in greatest numbers along the banks of the Orontes. They are regular in form, generally truncated cones, and vary in height from 50 to 250 feet. Similar mounds are found in the Bukâ'a and plain of Damascus. Villages generally stand upon or beside them, and fountains, or large cisterns, and wells are

always close to those that are situated at a distance from the river. They resemble the mounds on the plains of Mesopotamia and Assyria, from which monuments and sculptures of such great interest have lately been exhumed. It is highly probable that, were some of the more extensive of the Syrian mounds excavated, sculptured tablets, like those of Nimroud and Kouyunjik, would be discovered.

The mound on which the castle of Hüms stood is about 300 yards in diameter and 200 feet high. It was encompassed by a moat, now in part filled up with rubbish. Its sloping sides were paved with square blocks of basalt; portions of it still remain, but the greater part has been carried off to pave the streets of the town. Round the summit was a wall of great strength. Not a fragment of the castle itself remains, and the only buildings standing are portions of the flanking towers along the northern wall, which are chiefly Saracenic. The summit is covered with heaps of rubbish, mixed with which I observed several large fragments of red and grey granite columns, the remains, no doubt, of the Temple of the Sun. Underneath are large vaulted chambers and cisterns. A modern wely, with a white dome, stands on the summit, and is a conspicuous object for miles around.

Hüms is one of the cleanest and most regular towns in Syria. The streets are in general paved, and the walls of the houses are of stone, so that there is not such an accumulation of mud and dust as in Damascus. No buildings of any extent or antiquity remain; but large hewn stones, and columns of granite, basalt, and limestone are scattered through the streets, and bear testimony to ancient architectural beauty. It is encompassed with modern walls, but they are only sufficient to check a sudden raid of Bedawin. On the N.W. side, near the barracks, are foundations of ancient baths, and I there saw some squares of fine mosaic pavement. I observed several fragments of Greek inscriptions in the walls and streets, but none of any historical importance. The town is said to contain 20,000 inhabitants, 7000 of whom are Christians, chiefly of the Greek Church. There is also a small community of Jacobites. These are a singu-

lar and interesting people. They have not the cringing, subdued look of the other Christians, but are independent in spirit, and bold and resolute in conduct. They are from the village of Südüd, and are called Südüdyeh. Ninety years ago not a single Jacobite was found save in that village, but now they number 6000 souls, and colonies of them occupy Zeidân, Meskîneh, Feirûzy, Furtâka, and Kuseib, and others have settled in Kuseir and Hamâh. The Jacobites are thus increasing, while almost all the other sects are diminishing; and this is all the more remarkable as their homes are, with one or two exceptions, on the very outskirts of civilization, and they are forced to contend single-handed with the wild tribes of the desert.

The town of Hŭms cannot lay claim to such remote antiquity as Hamâh, Riblah, and Südüd. It was probably founded, or at least first rose to distinction, during the rule of the Seleucidæ. It is not mentioned in Scripture, but it is referred to by Josephus and the earliest Roman geographers. Its ancient name was EMESA. Pliny calls it HEMESA; but it was subsequent to the age of both these writers that it came into notice among the cities of the Roman empire. It was celebrated for its magnificent Temple of the Sun, and the office of chief priest was considered so important and honourable that the noblest families of Rome aspired to it. In A.D. 218, two youths held the office in concert, who only resigned it when elevated, the one to the throne of the Cæsars, and the other to the dignity of Augustus. These youths were Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius Severus, afterwards known as the Emperor *Alexander Severus*. A short time previously Emesa had been raised by the Emperor Caracalla, cousin of Antoninus, to the rank of a Roman colony; but when the latter attained to power he made his native city a metropolis. Nearly half a century later Odenatus, the husband of the celebrated Zenobia, was murdered in Emesa; and a few years afterwards the armies of Zenobia herself were overthrown on the neighbouring plain. Longinus, the *sublime* philosopher, was a native of Emesa. It was while on a visit to this city he gained the

acquaintance and friendship of Zenobia, who appointed him her instructor in the Greek language and literature. This city afterwards became the capital of the province of Phœnicia of Libanus, and was for a time superior in rank to Damascus. It has always maintained a good degree of prosperity, and is still among the most active and bustling inland towns of the country.

It had been our intention to proceed from Hüms to Südüd, but this district, being exposed to the incursions of Arabs, cannot be traversed with safety at any time, except with a strong escort ; under present circumstances it would have been folly to attempt to go alone.

Tuesday, October 18th.—At 11.30 we left the gate of Hüms, and took the caravan-road southward. Near the city the plain is well cultivated ; but after a few miles cultivation ceases, and the whole expanse is a wilderness. The road is among the best in Syria, and we passed over it at a rapid pace, for there was nothing to be seen and much to be feared. At 1.30 we had on our left the village of Shinshâr, built within the walls of an old khan. The inhabitants can thus resist sudden incursions of Arabs, and guard their flocks from night depredations. At 2.7 we reached Shemsîn, another caravanserai inhabited by a few families. The people came round us with as much surprise as if we had descended from the clouds. That four horsemen should travel along such an exposed road at such a time was more than they could comprehend. From this place I saw Hasya, and Tell Neby Mindow, on the banks of the Orontes. The castle of Hüsn was also visible in the distance to the right of the latter. Along the eastern horizon the plain spread out like a sea, without hill, tree, or solitary ruin. After a pause of twelve minutes we again mounted, and at 2.50 had the first swell of Antilebanon about two miles on our right. Here were pits on the side of the road, a few yards distant, excavated by the Bedawîn as hiding-places in which to lie in wait for travellers. We had been warned of the danger we should be exposed to in travelling along this dreary and unguarded road, and we now saw how easily a band of

desert marauders could intercept and strip us. On crossing a gentle swell we observed a party of horsemen to the right near the base of the mountains, proceeding at a fast pace. Almost immediately after we saw them they changed their course and turned eastward, as if to intercept us, but they were still so distant that we could neither tell their number nor equipment. After a few minutes they disappeared in a wady. Seeing an isolated tower on the side of the road in front, we pressed on to reach it, if possible, ere the party came up, that we might thus have a place of defence in case of attack. After an anxious half hour we reached the brow of the wady into which the cavaliers had ridden, but we looked for them in vain. In a few minutes, however, I saw a single horseman far to the right, while, on a rising ground beyond, the others soon appeared, ascending the mountain-side. This is a land where every man fears his fellow. These were probably peasants or peaceful village elders going to the plain of Hüms, but, seeing our party in such a suspicious locality, they dreaded an attack, and by a stratagem escaped, as they supposed, imminent danger. We crossed the wady and reached the little tower at 4 o'clock. Beside it is a large reservoir, at which is a stone with a long and beautiful Arabic inscription. In twenty-five minutes more we entered Hasya.

Hasya was originally one of the great khans along this route, and, when it became ruinous, huts were erected within it, and a few families of peasants found protection here while they cultivated a portion of the plain. A fine stream, collected by a subterranean canal, was formerly conducted to it from the eastward; but, as this rendered the village a favourite halting-place for Government troops, the inhabitants destroyed the canal in order to be freed from the exactions and insolence of these licensed bandits! They now suffer severely from scarcity of water, yet they are so glad that their scheme had the desired effect. Hasya is the residence of one of the border chiefs employed by Government to protect the road and keep the Bedawîn in check. Muhammed es-Suidân, the present *aga*, is a man of

pleasing manners and considerable information, though deficient in that dignity which is generally found in hereditary chieftains. He received us with kindness and hospitality, and showed much anxiety to obtain information about the nations of Europe, their extent, population, and military force. We happened to have with us one of those admirable compendiums of geography published at the Beyrout Mission Press, and we presented it to him. He was greatly pleased with the gift, and was surprised at the facility with which he could obtain the information he desired. He was appointed to office on the death of his uncle, Sâleh Aga. The death of the latter was a fearful tragedy. Some tribes of the Anezy had disputed with Bedawîn from the north. Sâleh Aga proceeded to their encampment, with an escort of only thirty men, to endeavour to maintain peace. Owing to some imprudence on the part of his retinue, or some old feud between them and the Bedawîn, the latter surrounded him with a body of 1200 horse. A brief but feeble resistance was made. The aga was taken alive and hanged; twelve of his guard were killed on the spot, and the remainder were left for dead on the plain. The Arabs fled, and, assistance having come, the wounded men were conveyed to Hasya, where in the end most of them recovered. This event occurred about a week subsequent to my own capture by the Anezy near Palmyra, and the same men were the perpetrators of this foul deed.

The aga expressed his surprise that we had ventured to travel alone from Hûms; and informed us that the road was now very unsafe. Two large tribes of the Wûlid 'Aly had lately pitched their tents at Kuryetein, and the 'Omûr were encamped in the northern defiles of Antilebanon. He said he had received private information that some parties of them intended to take advantage of the unsettled state of public affairs, and intercept passengers and caravans. On this account he would not permit us to proceed alone to Kâra, but proposed that we should join a caravan about to set out in a few hours. I did not much like this arrangement, but we thought it best to follow his advice.

THE NORTHERN BORDER OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL.

As I have referred in these notes to several well-known ancient sites, it may not be out of place to introduce a few remarks about the northern border of the "Land of Promise," along which the towns were situated. This border is defined by Moses and Ezekiel; but their descriptions present difficulties not easily solved. I do not profess to have cleared away all these difficulties, nor is it my purpose to enter into a long examination of the theories that have been advanced. I propose to give in a few sentences the results of a careful examination of this section of country, accompanied with an unprejudiced study of such passages of Scripture as tend to define the border-line.

The following is the description of the northern border given by Moses: "And this shall be your north border: from the great sea ye shall point out for you Mount Hor: From Mount Hor ye shall point out your border unto the entrance of Hamath; and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad: And the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan."¹ The following is Ezekiel's: "And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath."² In giving the boundaries of Dan, he thus writes: "From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east and west; a portion for Dan."³ The *Great Sea* is the starting-point, and the first inland mark is Mount *Hor*, or the "Great Mountain." This of itself is indefinite, and the position of the mountain must be determined by

¹ Num. xxxiv. 7-9.² Ezek. xlvii. 15-17.³ Ezek. xlviii. 1.

other circumstances. This great mountain was connected with the "entrance of Hamath;" but this entrance may be differently understood, according to the position of the writer: it may mean the entrance from between the parallel chains of Lebanon and Antilebanon from the S., or between Lebanon and the Nusairiyeh mountains from the W. It appears to me that the latter must be understood here, as the starting-point is *from the sea*; and Ezekiel says, "The west side (of the land) also shall be the great sea from the (southern) border, *till a man come over against Hamath*."¹ That the pass alluded to is the natural entrance of Hamath from the Mediterranean, none who knows the country will for a moment doubt. The "entrance of Hamath," mentioned in Numbers, I conceive to be identical with "the way of Hethlon," in Ezekiel. This way of Hethlon is said to be "as men go to Zedad," in one place; in another, "as men go to Hamath." Both are correct; for the pass above referred to is the natural, and indeed the *only*, entrance to Zedad and Hamath. This "way of Hethlon," however, must be regarded as defining the boundary of the land only through the pass. So far one follows the same course, whether he journeys from the coast to Südüd or to Hamâh. Having such data to guide us, we may conclude that the "Great Mountain" is the northern point of Lebanon. The border, therefore, ran from the shore of the Mediterranean across the level tract toward the northern brow of this range, and then swept through the pass to the border of the plain of Hamath.

Having got so far, we know from Ezekiel, as above quoted, that Hamath was included in the land, but whether the *city* or *territory*, is doubtful. It appears, from the mention of Ziphron, that the boundary-line must at least have gone near the city, as Ziphron has been identified with Zifrûn near Hamâh. The border would, therefore, run from the opening in the mountains to Hamâh. The goings forth of the border are said to be to Zedad, and also to Hazar-enan; but this is indefinite. It probably signified that both these places

¹ Ezek. xlvii. 20.

stood near the eastern outskirts of the territory. The site of the former is known ; but where is the latter ? We may infer that, as it is given as a mark not only of the *northern* but of the *eastern* border, it must have been eastward of Südüd ; and because it stood on the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath, as Ezekiel affirms, it must have been S. of Südüd. The name signifies "village of fountains;" and though this name might seem very indefinite, it is not so in reality. There is, in fact, only one spot in this region where there are large fountains, and that is *Kuryetein*. Between it and the banks of the Orontes there is not a single fountain. The supply of water for the other villages near Südüd was obtained by subterranean canals and cisterns. *Kuryetein* is the dual of *Kurieh*, which has the same signification as *Hazar*, "a village." If this identification can be relied upon, the border would come down from the neighbourhood of Hamath toward Kuryetein, thus including the plains of Hamâh and Hûms.

Such is my view of the northern border. But it appears that, while this border is identical in Numbers and Ezekiel, the *eastern border* is different. In Numbers it is thus described: "And ye shall point out your east border from Hazar-enan to Shepham: And the coast shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward."¹ Whereas in Ezekiel it is: "And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea."² Now a consideration of these passages shows that Ezekiel extended the eastern border much farther than Moses. The latter draws it from Hazar-enan, which appears to have been at or near the north-eastern extremity of the land, to Riblah. We know nothing of Shepham, but it lay probably to the S. of Südüd. This line, therefore, according to the view above expounded, would sweep round, with a curve to the S., from Kuryetein to Riblah, and there turn southward along the

¹ Num. xxxiv. 10, 11.

² Ezek. xlvii. 18.

western base of Hermon, to the sea of Tiberias. The plain of Hūms would thus be included, together with the Bukâ'a, *but the whole territory of Damascus left out.* In Ezekiel Damascus is *included*, with the country E. of the Jordan.

At 8.50 P.M. our horses were ready, and, bidding adieu to our kind host, we mounted. We found that the aga had attached three of his horsemen to us as a body-guard, with instructions to keep by our sides till we entered Kâra, and not on any account to leave the caravan, which had already been gone for some time. Our road led up an easy slope, the base of Antilebanon being about half an hour on our right. The moon was full, and shining gloriously in an unclouded sky. The general features of the country were clearly seen, and the only difficulty I experienced was in estimating the distances of the hills and mountains: this information our guards were competent to give. In an hour we overtook the caravan. It consisted of about seventy animals—camels, mules, and donkeys; accompanied by from thirty to forty men, mostly armed with muskets. A few mounted guards were attached to it. At 10.20 we had on our right an old ruined tower; and here the ground became more broken and stony, with white hills at intervals. We here turned S., and, after a dreary ride of nearly two hours over a rocky plain, reached Bureij. We were now in advance of the caravan, and our guards requested us to wait till it came up, as the most dangerous part of the route was before us. We accordingly sat down on an old sarcophagus beside the gate of the village. Bureij was formerly a fortified khan, and within its strong walls and iron-plated gate the villagers rest secure.

In half an hour the caravan came up, and we mounted. Almost immediately we entered a wady between hills of white limestone. On leaving it we skirted the western side of a conical peak, the commencement of a low ridge that runs eastward toward Südüd. Our guards enlivened the dreariness of the ride by tales of border warfare, the scenes

of which were laid in the plain before us ; and just at this spot an incident occurred which we for a few moments thought was about to afford an example of such contests as our companions described. On ascending the eminence on the western slope of the hill we saw the dark outline of a large party in front. On account of the inequality of the ground, we were within gunshot ere we recognised them, and it became at once apparent they were Bedawîn. The cry was raised in the caravan, "Arabs! Arabs!" and in a moment every gun was seized, and the sharp tick of the locks sounded ominously in our ears. We occupied the front rank, and our guards, with all the horsemen, were by our side. The advancing party was challenged, but returned no answer ; ours came on at a quick pace. Again we cried, "Who comes?" and our guards presented their muskets ; fortunately, a friendly answer was heard. They turned out to be a party of Bedawîn from the neighbourhood of Hîms, returning from Damascus.

We were now on the borders of a plain almost surrounded by hills. Close on our right was an irregular ascent to a plateau that here runs along the base of the mountain-ridge. To the eastward is an opening through which the plain is drained. A group of tells, with gravelly sides, rises in front of the line of road. Behind them is a meadow with two fountains, called 'Ayûn el-'Alak. There are no ruins near it, but on its southern side is a low ridge terminating to the left in a conical hill, on the summit of which stands a half-ruined tower. This spot is celebrated as a resort of robbers. Bands of Bedawîn come here mounted on their fleetest mares, and remain quietly round the fountain until their pickets give notice of the approach of a caravan. They then bear down upon their prey, and, except fire-arms are abundant, resistance is worse than useless. The booty is seized, the horses' heads turned eastward, and the noble animals are soon far beyond reach of pursuit. It sometimes happens, however, that a few well-directed shots turn the tide of battle. The Bedawîn never carry guns on these occasions : the spear is their only weapon ; and where

they meet with a determined band, armed with muskets, they rarely risk their own lives, or those of their horses, in a contest.

After a few minutes' delay we again started, and, as there was nothing now to fear, we rode on at a quick pace, and reached Kâra in forty minutes. This is a large village with two spacious khans, fast falling to ruin. The surrounding country is an undulating plain intersected by irregular ridges; and with the exception of a few gardens by the side of the stream that flows past, the whole is bleak and uninteresting. Kâra is an ancient site, and contains some remains of antiquity built up in its modern houses. It was the seat of a bishop in the early centuries of the Christian era. Its former name was KHARA, or, as it is generally written, COMOCHARA.

We dismissed our guards, and, accompanied by a Kurdish horseman, who requested permission to join our party, we mounted, after half an hour's rest, and set out for Nebk. The road winds over undulating ground for the first hour and a half. In three-quarters of an hour we saw on our left, on the summit of a hill, a ruined tower. These buildings seem to have been placed at intervals along this road, probably as watch-towers. At this place we turned to the left, passed through an opening in a ridge of hills, and soon again resumed our former course across a fertile plain. The trees in the gardens of Deir 'Atîyeh were visible about a mile and a half on our left. As we rode along we were alarmed to hear discharges of musketry in the direction of the last-named village. The night was far advanced, and we could not imagine any cause for such firing, except an encounter between the villagers and the Bedawîn. We spurred on our horses; but the volleys became nearer and more frequent. Ere many minutes the sound of horses' feet was heard in the distance, and a dark figure approached. Before we had time to express surprise a cavalier advanced at gallop, and, reining up his steed in our path, demanded whence we came. Ere we could reply, two others joined him; and we observed that they all held their arms ready